The TAJ MAHAL is a Hindu Palace

P. H. OAK



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This book is dedicated in grateful memory particularly to Her Highness the late Maharani Chandrawati Holkar of Indore to whose munificence the author owes a part of his academic education, and generally to the great Kshatriya community of India which defended the faith and culture of the country against foreign invasions for milleniums with exemplary devotion to duty, courage, sacrifice, and a very high standard of magnanimity and moral purity which distinguish it from all soldiery anywhere in the world

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Some Blunders of Indian Historical Research

The Rationale of Astrology

Who Says Akbar was Great?

India's Second War of Independence (in Marathi)

In Netaji's Company (in Marathi)

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Preface
to
*Taj Mahal Was A Rajput Palace**

The serene beauty majesty and grandeur of the Taj Mahal has made it known all over the world But what is not so well known is the true story of its origin that its magnificence stems from its having originated as a palace

It is a pity that the Taj Mahal is believed to have originated as a sombre tomb in the 17th Century when it was perhaps built in the 4th Century to serve as a palace

The suddenness with which his gay and magnificent palace got converted into a tomb must have constituted a very unfortunate occurrence of Jaisingh s life

The changeover has proved a shroud deluding every body from lay visitors to researchers and history scholars that the Taj was built as a sepulchre

Popular nostalgia for legendary love has helped fan the flame of Shahjahan s mythical attachment to Mumtaz into a raging fire enveloping the Taj in the dazzle of leaping flames and blinding smoke of imaginary accounts, discouraging any cool dispassionate research about its origin

The utter incompatibility and inconsistency of the loose bits of information mouthed and written about the Taj Mahal clanking to a crescendo of jarring notes in my subconscious mind impelled me to at

* Published April 1965 a forerunner to the present volume

tempt sorting them out from a tangled mass and piecing them together to find out whether they made a coherent and plausible account

To my amazement it led me to an unexpected conclusion, namely, that far from originating as a mediaeval tomb the Taj was built by a powerful Rajput king as his palace in pre Muslim times.

My research has also led to an incidental but nonetheless important finding, that the Peacock Throne too is perhaps as ancient as the Taj Mahal, and that it used to be placed in the chamber which encloses the cenotaphs of Shahjahan and Mumtaz

My conclusions are based on a number of historical works both mediaeval and modern A list of them appears at the end of this book I have quoted from those authorities extensively The extracts, accompanied by the relevant details about the name of the book author and page number, have been included in the narrative itself instead of appearing as foot notes at the bottom of each page

The conclusions reached in this book might unsettle some important portions of mediaeval history as currently taught and presented But since all education is a relentless search for the Truth it is hoped that all readers, whether lay admirers of the Taj prying scholars or researchers, archaeological officials or teachers of history will neither shy away nor be scared in facing the truth about the Taj

February 1965 *P N Oak*

INTRODUCTION

Unlike this book and its forerunner titled *Taj Mahal was a Rajput Palace* which are research works, all other books and accounts of the Taj Mahal written during the last 300 years are based on pure fantasy. We were surprised to learn after meticulous inquiry that despite the plethora of printed hocus pocus churned out on the Taj Mahal all the world over there is not a single book containing a well-documented comprehensive account of the origin of the Taj Mahal quoting exhaustively only contemporary authorities. Subsequent hearsay accounts are hardly worth any notice for historical research, since one writer s opinion is as good as any other s.

S nce the Taj Mahal is a building-complex of world renown the absence of a single coherent and unquestionably authentic account is indeed surprising How and why have universities and research institutions the world over bypassed such a stupendous and attractive subject like the Taj Mahal? Why do all accounts of the Taj Mahal content themselves with merely l sping the self same confused irreconcilable and slipshod imaginary details about its origin the period of con struction the expense incurred the source of the money spent the designers and workmen the date of Mumtaz s burial in it and every other facet?

Perhaps it is just as well that no scholarly body ever succeeded in producing a coherent and authoritative account of the building of the Taj Mahal. Whosoever attempted to do any research on the subject got lost

in such a maze of inconsistent and contradictory accounts that he found himself helplessly repeating the same old abracadabra He had to be content with placing before the reader loose bits of inconsistent anomalous and contradictory versions on every point. All aspects of the Shahjahan legend regarding the Taj Mahal being suspect, it was but natural that attempts at compiling an authoritative account of the origin of the Taj Mahal should miserably fail Nobody ever succeeded in or hoped to say the last convincing word on the origin of the Taj Mahal All previous attempts were bound to fail since they were all based on a wrong notion Starting with wrong premises, they could not arrive at the right conclusion.

We are going to prove in the following pages that the Taj Mahal—meaning 'the Very Crown Among Residences'—is an ancient Hindu building and not a Muslim tomb We shall also show how all the loose bits of information—whether factual or concocted—dished out on the platter of the Shahjahan legend fall in place and fully support our research Just as the solution to a mathematical problem may be tested for its accuracy by various methods similarly, sound historical research provides a consistent and coherent story reconciling all apparent inconsistencies.

In this book we have reproduced in photostat a passage from Shahjahan's court chronicle, the *Badshahnama* which disarmingly admits that the Taj Mahal is a commandeered Hindu palace We have also quoted the French merchant Tavernier who visited India during Shahjahan's reign to say that the cost of the scaffolding exceeded that of the entire work done regarding the mausoleum. This proves that all that Shahjahan had to do was engrave Koranic texts

on the walls of a Hindu palace, that is why the cost of the scaffolding was much more than the value of the entire work done We have cited the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as stating that the Taj Mahal building complex comprises stables and guest and guard rooms. We have quoted Mr Nurul Hasan Siddiqui s book admitting as the *Badshahnama* does, that a Hindu palace was commandeered to bury Mumtaz in We have cited Shahjahan s fifth generation ancestor Babur to prove that he lived in what we call the 'Taj Mahal', 100 years before the death of the lady for whom the Taj is believed to have been built as a mausoleum We have also quoted Vincent Smith to show that Babur died in the Taj Mahal In addition to these proofs we have scotched the Shahjahan legend in every detail and cited other voluminous evidence proving conclusively that the Taj Mahal is an ancient Hindu building

The overwhelming proof that we have produced in this book should once for all silence all doubters of the correctness of our finding and convince them that the whole world can go wrong where one man proves right This has happened time and again in human history Galileo and Einstein, for example shocked contemporary humanity out of their rusted dogma shells

It was by sheer luck that we happened to find corroboration for our earlier finding on the Taj Mahal, in the *Badshahnama* Mr Siddiqui s book Tavernier s travel account and Babur s *Memoirs* But we wish to take this opportunity to alert posterity and our contemporaries interested in research and tell them that the proofs set out in our earlier book *(Taj Mahal was a Rajput Palace)* was more than enough to con-

since all those well versed in judicial procedure and logic, that the Taj Mahal existed much before Mumtaz s death whose tomb it is supposed to be

Even if Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori (the author of the *Badshahnama)* and others had prevaricated the evidence we marshalled in our earlier book was enough to question their veracity and impel us to seek their motives This is a lesson worth imbibing by the lay public, and by researchers who have to wade through a mire of falsified and distorted accounts.

We have in this book proved to the hilt that the Taj Mahal has been built to its minutest detail according to the ancient Hindu science of architecture of the Hindus, for the Hindus and by the Hindus. Now that we have firmly established it in this and in the earlier book, the topic should encourage further research to trace the history of the Taj Mahal prior to Mansingh s and Babur s possession of it until we get to the original Hindu builder Jaipur royal records in the Rajasthan Archives at Bikaner or in the possession of the Jaipur ruling house might possess valuable clues. We have ourselves provided some clues in this book indicating that the Taj Mahal must have originated as Teja Mahalaya completed in 1155 56 A.D

We had to face a veritable barrage of scoffs and sneers and other worse reactions when we first published our findings. But we are unshaken in our conviction. Those jeers and sneers came from all quarters. Particularly painful were those emanating from eminent students of history Most expressed nothing but vehement contempt either audibly or through various acts of commission and omission. The lay public looked on dazed in disbelief and looked up

to history teachers and professors, as if they are oracles, for cues whether to laud or condemn us.

It is painful to note that scholars who felt themselves committed to the Shahjahan legend of the Taj Mahal, either by having authored books on the topic or guided post graduate students along the beaten track, or by virtue of their bureaucratic and academic standing, showed a marked tendency to remain strait-jacketed in their beliefs. Obstructionist and obscurantist objections were flung at us. Many angrily asserted that we had not proved our case. But that was a most unscholarly attitude. A true devotion to academic research should have urged them to give a second thought to the matter. If they were right, the revision would have worked to their own advantage, because it would have bolstered up their own earlier belief by giving them an opportunity to fill up the holes which we had pointed out. If they were in the wrong their holding on to their earlier dogmas was unwarranted. They thus failed to be guided by the maxim that, "If you are in the right you can afford to keep your temper; if in the wrong you cannot afford to lose it."

There is another maxim for the genuine researcher that any loopholes pointed out in an existing belief should lead to immediate intensified research rather than anger and hate against one who questions traditional beliefs. Trying to find fault with one who questions hackneyed beliefs is neither good ethics nor good scholarship. Finding fault with the method by which the discovery has been arrived at is worse. For all we know the method employed may be unorthodox or even occult. But what others should worry about is the end product or the result. They may later ask to be enlightened on the methods used but refusing

to examine the conclusion by cavilling at the method is missing the wood for the trees.

Luckily for us much water has flown down all the rivers since we first mooted our finding, and today our discovery is not looked upon—at least by some—as fantastic, quixotic, eccentric or just chauvinistic. The matter does not end with merely admitting the Taj Mahal to be a Hindu palace That finding has a very far reaching bearing on both Indian and world history

The Taj Mahal has all along been wrongly believed to be the very flower of the mythical Indo-Saracenic architecture Now that we have proved it to be an ancient Hindu building it should not be difficult for readers to regard with a little more respect and attention our finding explained in the book *Some Blunders of Indian Historical Research* that all mediaeval mosques and tombs in India are conquered and misused Hindu palaces and temples Thus Mohammad Ghaus's tomb in Gwalior, Salim Chisti s mausoleum in Fatehpur Sikri Nizamuddin's *kabar* in Delhi Moinuddin Chisti's *makabra* in Ajmer, are all erstwhile Hindu buildings lost to Muslim conquest and use

The other corollary to our finding on the Taj Mahal is that the Indo-Saracenic theory of architecture is a figment of the imagination It should be deleted forthwith from history books and text books of civil engineering and architecture But the actual amendment needed is minor, namely, that what has been termed as 'Indo-Saracenic architecture' should henceforth be understood to mean 'ancient Indian architecture.'"

A third corollary is that the dome is a Hindu form of architecture

A fourth corollary is that buildings in India and West Asia *which have a resemblance to the Taj Mahal* are products of Hindu archiecture *(Shilpashastra)* Just as in our own times we find Western architecture to be in vogue all over the world similarly in the ancient times it was only Hindu architecture which was prevalent all over the world no matter where a building was built for what purpose

During our discussions with university teachers and book reviewers we came across some curious objections to our thesis. Having read the earlier book they objected to our methodology as being argumentative, deductive and lawyer like.

This raises a very interesting point. Do they mean *to say that deductive logic and lawyer like arguments,* having no place in history research or being detrimental to arriving at correct conclusions in historical research should be altogether avoided? Their objection amounts to asserting that the conclusions arrived at by deductive logic or by the adjudicative process are all wrong.

We then ask whether Man did not arrive at his present state of knowledge in every branch of human inquiry with the help of his logical faculty? How else did he progress? Take the case of geography Thousands of years before Man could send up spacecraft to photograph the earth did he not correctly conclude that the earth was round by sheer logic? This should thoroughly expose the hollowness of the objection. Logic is justly called the science of sciences because it treats of reasoning which is the basis of all knowledge, from which history can claim no exemption

Moreover, we may remind such objectors that leading lights of historical methodology like Collingwood, Walsh, Renier, Langley, Seignbos, Berkley and Lord Sankey have precisely and repeatedly stressed that detective-type investigation, lawyer like argumentation and deductive reasoning are the very heart and soul of historical methodology, and that a true historian must look with suspicion even on long standing and seemingly well founded beliefs. To drive this point home we have included in this book a chapter on methodology Those unable to extricate themselves from the rut of traditional thinking should know on reading that chapter that the reason why their finding on the origin of the Taj Mahal has been so wide off the truth is precisely because they have ignored or violated the guidelines for research laid down by the very scholars by whose names they have been swearing.

Incidentally this leads to an ancillary conclusion, namely that Indian and world histories have been saddled with numerous wrong concepts precisely because teachers and researchers have all along been following wrong methodology The fault, therefore, does not lie in our methodology The boot is on the other leg It was but natural that antediluvian attitudes should cause havoc in Indian and world history The result is that today we find to our chagrin, after hundreds of years, that all that we have solicitously taught to generations of students about so-called Muslim architecture in India and their alleged benevolent rule, has to be abandoned

The need to reexamine the different versions of the Shahjahan legend of the Taj Mahal arises because the world deserves to be told the truth about this enchant

ing mansion, namely that the Taj Mahal was not born out of the death of Shahjahan's consort Mumtaz. The ghosts of Shahjahan and Mumtaz have haunted the Taj Mahal story in the minds of the people for 300 long years. It is high time that people's minds were exorcised

Another very important purpose we have in mind in unravelling the Taj Mahal creation riddle, is to expose the unmethodical and slipshod manner in which many far reaching concepts have been grafted on Indian history, and foisted on gullible unsuspecting lay contemporaries and on posterity Reconstructing *the story of the origin of the Taj Mahal should serve as a practice lesson in research methodology, exposing* lapses committed so far and highlighting the principles and safeguards that need to be kept in view by history researchers and teachers

This book is also intended to impress on every reader that it is not the tombs which should monopolise his or her attention. The visitor must go round the entire premises walk along its long arched corridors, *run up the Taj Mahal s many storeys and its* marble and redstone towers and minutely examine its many vaulted doorways. The two tombs in the basement and the cenotaphs above them on the ground floor are, if anything but obstructions in the spacious octagonal chambers of this ancient Hindu palace One of these rooms housed the ancient Hindu Peacock Throne which too was grabbed by Shahjahan along with the palace

Thoughtful readers unwittingly but nonetheless irrevocably committed, academically or communally, to the view that the Taj Mahal is a Muslim monument are likely to feel perturbed, disturbed and hurt by the

revelation in this book. Some others are likely to welcome the discovery of the Taj Mahal s ancient Hindu origin as a welcome truth To both such we would like to say that to us Truth is like water—tasteless and colourless divine pure and life giving—neither sweet nor bitter For us Truth is a mere object of discovery —as in fact, it should be in all creative endeavour We hardly care if any feel elated or dejected by the discovery of the Hindu antecedents of the Taj Mahal

In the field of history such a breath taking and epoch making discovery proving the whole world wrong is a rare occurrence All the same we claim no personal credit or victory because such discoveries are impossible without supra natural guidance, opportunity and inspiration

But to those who would want to underrate or pooh pooh the antecedents of the Taj Mahal as being of no consequence for a real appraisal of its delicate contours majestic dimensions and enchanting embellishment we would like to address a few words Looking at the Taj Mahal as a tomb or a palace makes a world of difference A palace is the residence of the prosperous, wealthy and powerful and therefore a down to-earth building. A tomb on the other hand is the weird eerie abode of those who have given up the ghost Visitors or students labouring under the misapprehension that the Taj Mahal is a mausoleum regard the graves inside it as the focal object of admiration and thereby miss the real beauty of that vast building-complex On the other hand if visitors and students of history studied the Taj Mahal as a palace they would find their observation rapturously rewarding In the latter case they would no longer be content with peeping into the burial chamber and walk

ing out, calling it a day, as many have hitherto been prone to do, but would insist on roaming around its spacious grounds, going around its periphery, ambling along its spacious terraces, stumbling through its dark basement chambers and climbing its towers and upper storeys

Among the many difficulties one encounters in driving a new startling discovery deep down into the basic convictions of the people is one of frivolous objections. For example erudite teachers of history sometimes, in all honesty, refuse to look into historical rebuttals on the ground that "original" historical sources are not quoted This attitude of theirs has two faults. One is their assumption of the supercilious role of a judge to which they are not entitled Whatever their academic or bureaucratic standing they must feel a sense of belonging and participation in all research and regard themselves as humble seekers after the Truth, having as good a stake in the rebuttal as the pioneer himself Looked at from this point of view their self-chosen role of sitting on the sidelines and blowing the whistle like a fault finding referee is highly improper The other fault in their peculiar standoffish and judgment pronouncing attitude is the very mechanical, nonchalant and even irresponsible way in which they raise an objection that the source quoted is only "secondary" and not "original" They feel they are justified in ignoring my research findings. They clutch at this to ease the qualms of their academic conscience To all such we would like to say that the technical objection of the source being "original" or "secondary" is relevant only if the facts cited are not admitted Even a court of law and justice takes judicial notice of age-old facts Similarly, scholars of

history and for that matter other branches of study, have got to take "historical notice" of facts which are not disputed

For instance, in the following pages when we quote Vincent Smith or Elliot and Dowson it is only to produce before the reader quick, cut and dry, capsule-form well digested and translated and summarised evidence from readily available volumes. So long as facts quoted by them are not doubted the objection that the original source has not been quoted is absolutely unjustified if not downright mischievous How many people can get access to the hand written originals? If so many people do in fact handle those originals how long will those originals be available for posterity? And what research could proceed to any appreciable degree if at every stage the researcher's footsteps are dogged with the argument that he has not produced all original sources, all over the world in all languages, on every point? This way it would be impossible to write even a word Have the objectors themselves ever tried it in the tomes they have written!

Before the scholarly reader thinks of raising any such objection therefore we would request him to consider whether he disputes the quoted facts or words. If the facts or words quoted are not disputed they do not need any artificial props of authority, whether primary or secondary

The discovery that the Taj Mahal is a Hindu palace should serve to change the perspectives of even the Government of India's Archaeological Department. So far they had been under the impression that if the two tombs and cenotaphs were kept open to public inspection that was being generous enough But once

it is admitted that the Taj Mahal is a palace that small mercy will not be enough. The barred basement, the *many towers, the upper storeys of the marble structure and the subterranean passage leading to the fort* will all have to be well cleaned and thrown open to public view.

In browsing through the subsequent pages the reader should be conscious of the very far reaching bearing that our finding has on both Indian and world history.

One very devastating effect of this book is that at *one stroke it renders obsolete all the romantic and pseudo-historic hodge podge written in prose or poetry about the Taj Mahal throughout the world during the last 300 years.*

Architects, as much as historians, may find much to learn and unlearn in reading through the following pages.

Professional historians and architects would do well to get over their initial shock, consternation and disbelief, prepare themselves to jettison their traditional belief in the mythical Indo-Saracenic architecture theory, *and instead learn to view extant mediaeval monuments as products of pure ancient indigenous architecture.* Suitable amendments in *historical* and architectural text books will have to be made sooner or later.

Historians, architects and visitors to monuments should now be prepared to shed some of their carefully nursed assumptions based on fallacious tutoring and motivated brainwashing about the so-called Muslim contribution to mediaeval architecture. Muslim contribution to mediaeval architecture in India and all over the world is severely limited to misappropriating Hindu, Christian or Zionist buildings by inscribing

Arabic lettering outside or implanting tombs inside The world famous Taj Mahal, the Red Forts in Delhi and Agra the so-called Jama Masjid in Agra, the so-called Fatehpuri Mosque in Delhi and the innumerable monuments in cities like Ahmedabad Jaunpur Allahabad Mandavgadh Bidar Bijapur Fatehpur Sikri and Aurangabad are glaring and graphic instances of such wholesale misappropriation and deception of the entire world It is hoped that researchers and writers would come forward to write books on individual townships and monuments of mediaeval India and the world to expose what the late Sir H. M Elliot calls ' the impudent and interested fraud of history The writer of the present book will be happy to give them all the necessary guidance and clues.

Laymen sometimes ask that if the Taj Mahal existed centuries before Mumtaz's death in 1630-31, could not the radioactive carbon 14 test be applied to determine its age? This is a question for experts to answer If they have an infallible method they would certainly detect the difference in age of the material used in the tombs and that in most other parts of the Taj Mahal. But for any such test to be useful its margin of error must be precisely known. A five to ten years' error margin would not matter very much but if it extends to several centuries the tests would be unsuitable to verify the accuracy of the conclusion drawn from historical evidence that the Taj Mahal is a Hindu building comandeered for use as a Muslim tomb

Our government should now address itself to the task of amending its tourist literature histories.

archaeological shibboleths and official dossiers on the Taj Mahal and other mediaeval buildings

And the entire citizenry should gear itself up to bring about a complete change in its historical outlook and perspective.

N 128 Greater Kailas I *P N Oak*
New Delhi 48

CHAPTER 1

THE NEED TO RE-EXAMINE ANTECEDENTS

IN THE city of Agra in North India, on the banks of the Yamuna, stands a beautiful, majestic building complex known as the Taj Mahal It is by far the biggest tourist attraction in India and one of the most renowned in the world Three centuries of misinformed pressure publicity has resulted in focussing visitor attention only on two cenotaphs inside the Taj Mahal to the exclusion of its other remarkable features. The result has been disastrous to a detailed study of both its history and architecture

Until we alerted the public and governments the world over through our book titled *Taj Mahal Was A Rajput Palace*, published in 1965, it had been universally believed that the Taj Mahal originated as a Muslim tomb The traditional universal belief of the uninformed lay visitor based on mere hearsay, has been that the Taj Mahal owes its creation to the great amorous attachment that the fifth-generation Moghul ruler of India, Shahjahan, bore to his wife Mumtaz. On her death the disconsolate Emperor, they believe, raised the massive and spacious Taj Mahal as a monument to his love

History students, teachers, scholars, researchers and government officials connected with history and archaeology seem to be hardly better informed than the lay visitor At best, history teachers and officials carry a few spurious details about the Taj Mahal story

in their memory That those details are all contra dictory counterfeit, mutually inconsistent and anoma lous could be easily proved if they are collected to- gether and placed side by side for comparison.

So many concocted accounts of the mythical Shahjahan authorship of the Taj Mahal have been afloat for the last 300 years that one wonders how they never aroused anybody's suspicions Thus we have scholar after scholar of Indian history from almost every part of the world rapturously recount ing to us how the cost of the Taj Mahal could be anything between four to ninety million rupees, the designer could be anybody from a Turk, Persian or Italian to a Frenchman the period of construction could be anywhere between 10 and 22 years, and Mumtaz, the so-called Lady of the Taj Mahal could have been buried in its basement at any time from six months to nine years after her death. These are only a few absurdities anomalies and inconsistencies of the Taj Mahal story There are many more which we propose to expose in these pages.

We would like to record at the very outset our wonder as to how for 300 long years people the world over believed the arrant nonsense that a stupendous and fabulous monument like the Taj Mahal could at all be raised at least in India, to commemorate carnal love Such puerile credulity may be all right in the mumbo-jumbo of romantic fiction but is hardly justi fied in the context of the hard facts of Muslim courts in medieval India.

Before believing in the fabulous mausoleum theory two questions may be asked Firstly where are the historical records describing Shahjahan s ro- mantic attachment to Mumtaz—one of his 5 000 con

sorts—prior to her death? Secondly, how many palaces did Shahjahan build for his sweetheart Mumtaz while she was alive before he built one over her dead body?

Histories are silent on both these points The answer to the first is that there are no accounts of the Shahjahan Mumtaz romance because there never was any That so called romantic attachment was a graft to justify the mythical creation of the Taj Mahal as a wonder tomb The answer to the second question is that Shahjahan did not build any palace for Mumtaz alive or dead

We would commend this method of asking challenging questions to oneself at every stage to ensure that one s premises are flawless before proceeding with one s research

We would like to emphatically record here that however much it may please Western sentiment, the notion that the Taj Mahal is a marble phantom of the love that Shahjahan bore for Mumtaz, is simply silly It never happened in mediaeval India and probably never happens anywhere else in the world Every Moghul monarch had at least 5 000 consorts in his harem and many more at his command outside He had hardly the time or the heart to idolize only one of his several thousand consorts.

It is a pity that in the mistaken belief of Shahjahan s love for Mumtaz, historical scholarship allowed itself to go berserk for 300 years, conjuring up fantastic details. In the process it even forgot to check up on its facts and see that they are at least consistent with one another The result, therefore, has been that history has been loaded with a mass of incongruent details.

Since the fictitious accounts of the Taj Mahal are legion, collecting and compiling all of them is an impossible task. Any number of such accounts could have been conjured up in any part of the world by anyone enamoured by the mythical Shahjahan legend during the last 300 years But we propose to present in this volume a select assortment of those fictitious accounts and prove how bogus and mutually inconsistent they are

ADMISSION IN SHAHJAHAN'S OWN BADSHAHNAMA

A CLEAR, unequivocal and disarming admission that the Taj Mahal is a Hindu palace commandeered for use as a Muslim tomb is contained in Shahjahan's own court chronicle written by a paid courtier named Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori

In Elliot and Dowson[1] we are told, "*Badshahnama* of Abdul Hamid Lahori is a history of the first twenty years of the reign of Shahjahan ... Abdul Hamid himself says in his preface that the Emperor desired to find an author who could write the memoirs of his reign in the style of Abul Fazl's *Akbarnama*. He was recommended to the Emperor for the work, and was called from Patna, where he was living in retirement to undertake the composition" From this passage it is clear that Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori wrote the *Badshahnama* (in Persian) as an official chronicle at Emperor Shahjahan's own command The Persian text in its original form is published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal Reproduced elsewhere in

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[1] P 3 *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians* Vol. VII, The Posthumous Papers of the late Sir H M Elliot, K.C.B., edited by Professor John Dowson, M.R.A.S. published by Kitab Mahal (Private) Ltd., 56-A Zero Road, Allahabad 1

this book are pages 402 and 403 of Vol. I of this *Badshahnama*.[a]

There are 22 lines on page 402 and 19 on page 403 We have numbered them serially so that those who cannot read the Persian script may follow the line-by-line transcript in the Roman script and later the line-by-line rendering in English.

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE PERSIAN PASSAGE, IN ROMAN CHARACTERS (PAGE 402)

1. Har do ra az ham juda mee sakht wa ba hamin zorhae' beja beemar shudah
2. Pas az chande dar zindagi e pidar sipare shud, saabiqa chun Fateh Khan
3. Pisare Ambar ba waseelae Yaminuddoulah Asif Khan arzah dasht mehtawe bar
4 Dowlat khwahi wa hawa jooee firistadah maarooz dashta bood keh ein
5. Khidmatguzar ikhlas shiaar benizamra keh az kotah bini wa shaqawat
6 Guzeenee bad sagaali wa mukhalifate awliya-e dowlat-e-abad meeaad mee namood
7 Muqayyad sakhteh ummidwar-i marahim-i bad-shahi ast, wa dar jawabe aan farman
8. Qazah jiriyan (sic) izze sudoor yafteh bawad keh agar guftar-e-oo farooghe rastee darad
9 Jahan ra az aalaaishe wajoode besawaad-e-oo pak gardaanad chun Fateh Khan

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[a] Persian text of Mulla Abdul Hamid's *Badshahnama*, in two volumes, published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in the *Bibliotheca Indica* Series. I obtained the photostat from the copy in the National Archives, Government of India, in December 1965. Copies of that publication are available in all important institutional libraries throughout the world, dealing with Indian mediaeval history

10. Baad az waroode hukme jahan-mutah burhane-be-nizam bad farjam ra khufah namoodeh
11. Shoharat daad keh ba ajale tabecyee dar guzasht, wa Hussein nam pisare Darsalae
12. Oora janashin-e-aan badaayeen gurdaa need. Wa arzh dashtee mabnee az
13. Haqiqat-e-ein waqayeh ba dast-e-Muhammad Ibrahim keh az nowkarane moatamade oo
14. Bood, ba dargahe salateen panah firistad misale-lazimul imtisal sabir shud keh
15. Iqbale ra ke ba daroone hisare Dowlatabaad burdeh az quillat-e-aazooqah (supplies) zaayai Khwahand
16. Shud aan ra ba nafais jawahar wa murasseh alat-e-be-nizam hamrahe-pisare
17. Kalane khood ba rasme peshkash usaal numayad ta multimasaate oo, izze qubul yabad
18. Wa ba nanshoore nawazish kahpoh murassah wa da yake Iraqui ba zine-tila'
19. Deeagare Turkee rah waar ba zin-e-mutalaa' mashoobe Shukrullah Arab wa Fateh Khan
20. Ba Dowlatabaad farishtadand. Oodajiram ba benam-e chihal hazar roopiah sarfaraz gardeedeh
21. Rooze-juma' hafdahum Jamadil awal naashe muqaddase musafire aqleeme
22. Taqaddus hazarat mehd alia Mumtazuzzamaneera keh ba tareeqae a amaanat mudafoon

(PAGE 403):

23. Bood masahoobe Badshehzadae namdaar Muhammad Shah Shuja' Bahadur a Wazir Khan
24. Wa sati (sic) Unnisa Khanum keh ba mijaz shanasi wa kaardaanee ba darjae aolaee pesh

25 Dastee wa waqaalat elaan Maalike Jahan malikae jahaanivaan raseedeh bood rawane-e
26 Darul khalafae Akbarabad namoodand wahukm shud keh har roz dar rah aash e bisiyar
27 Wa darahim wa dinaneere be shumar ba fuqra wa nayazmdaan b bihand wa zamine dar
28 Nihayat rifaat wa nizaahat keh junoobrooe aan misr jaama' astwa
29 Pesh az ein Manzil-e Rajah Mansingh bood wadaree waqt ba Rajah Jaisingh
30 Nab rae taalluq dasht bara-e madfan e aan bahisht muwaattan bar guzeedand
31 Agarcheh Raja Jaisingh husule ein dawlatra foze azeem danisht anmab
32 Az rooe ahatiyaat keh dar jameeye shewan khu susan umoore diniyeh naguzir ast
33 *Dar' awaz aan aali manzil-e az khalsa e shariyah* badoo marahmat farmoodand
34 Baad az rasidane naash ba aan shahar e karamat bahar panz dahun Jamadi Ussanieh
35 Sale aayandeh paikare nooranee-e aan aasmaanee jowhar ba khake pak sipurdeh aamad
36 Wa mutasaddiyan-e-darul khilafah ba hukme muallie ajaalatul waqt turbat-e-falak marta bate
37 Aan jahan iffatra az nazar poshidand wa *Imaarat e-aalee shaan wa gumbaze*
38 Rafi bunyan keh ta rastakheez dar balandee yadgare himmate gardoon rifaat
39 Hazrate Sahib Qarah-e saani bashad wa dar ustuwaree namoodare istiqamat
40 Azayam banee tarah afgandand wa muhandisane doorbeen wa meamaraan-e saanat

41 Aafreen chihal lakh roopiah akharajate ein imaarat bar aawurd namoodand

THIS IS THE LINE BY LINE ENGLISH RENDERING (PAGE 402)

1 Both were separated from one another and with those unjust atrocities fell ill
2 After some time during his father's time (he) passed away Prior to this since Fatehkhan
3 Son of Ambar through Yaminuddaulah Asafkhan had submitted a petition,
4 Declaring his allegiance and loyalty and praying that this
5 Loyal servant full of sincerity requests that be cause of the shortsightedness and cruelty
6 Ill will and opposition of the royal officials came into play
7 And putting me under rigorous imprisonment—and I hope to receive Royal mercy and in validity of that death inflicting—
8 Royal order has had the honour of being issued and if that statement has any truth in it
9 Then this world should be relieved of the existence of such a person since Fatehkhan
10 After receiving the royal order—obeyed by the world—he advanced arguments and excuses for his bad administration
11 And publicised it to appear as a natural death and Hussain named son of Darsaleh was
12. Made successor illegally and a petition far from the
13 Reality of this event (was) sent through Moham mad Ibrahim—one of his trusted employees

14 And the court of the Protector of Kings—issued an order which had to be strictly complied with

15 That the confessor be taken inside Daulatabad fort and starved to death

16 And he with all the splendour and glory and fanfare accompanied by his son

17 Eldest (son) as per tradition be given a send off so that his requests were accepted

18 And equipped with the gracious charter (order) and with two horses—one Iraqi with golden saddle

19 The other—Turkish with an ornamental golden saddle through Shukurullah Arab and Fateh khan—

20 Were sent to Daulatabad—and Udajahan was honoured with a reward of Rs 40000 rupees

21 Friday—15th Jamadi ul awwal the sacred dead body of the traveller to the kingdom of

22 Holiness, hazrat Mumtazul Zamani—who was buried temporarily was sent—

(PAGE 403)

23 Accompanied by prince Mohammad Shah Shuja Bahadur Wazir Khan—

24 And Satiun Nisa Khanam—who knew the temperament of the (deceased) so intimately

25 And was well versed in the job and represented the views of that queen of queens etc.

26 Was brought to the capital Akbarabad (Agra) and an order was issued that every day

27 During the journey countless coins be distributed among the fakirs and needy The site

28 Covered with a majestic magnificent lush garden, to the south of that great city and (which)

29 Amidst which (garden) the building known as the palace (Manzil) of Raja Mansingh at present owned by Raja Jaisingh

30 Grandson (of Mansingh) was selected for the burial of the Queen whose abode is in heaven.

31 Although Raja Jaisingh *valued it greatly as his ancestral heritage* and property yet he would have been agreeable to part with it gratis for the Emperor Shahjahan.

32 (Still) out of sheer scrupulousness so essential in matters of bereavement and religious sanctity (thinking it improper to take his palace gratis) he (Jaisingh) was granted Sharifabad (in exchange)

33 In exchange of that (aali Manzil) *grand palace* he (Jaisingh) was granted government land

34 After the arrival of the dead body in that great city (Agra) on 15th Jamadul Saniya

35 Next year that illustrious body of the heavenly Queen was laid to rest

36 The officials of the capital, according to the royal orders of the day under the sky high lofty mausoleum

37 Hid (the body of) that pious lady from the eyes of the world and this Palace (Imarat E-Aali shan) so majestic and (capped) with a dome

38 So lofty that in its stature (it) is a memorial to the courage of sky-dimensions

39 (of) Sahib Qarani SANI—(the king) and so strength so mighty

40 ——In his resolution so firm—the foundation

was laid and geometricians with far sight and architects of talent

41 Incurred an expenditure of Rs. 40 lakhs on this building.

To make this passage a little more coherent and clear we would like to explain a few points

Emperor Shahjahan's wife Arjumand Banu died in Burhanpur either in 1630 or 1631 Her body was buried in a garden there but is said to have been exhumed after about six months and transported to Agra Even this single detail should have been enough to alert discerning and thoughtful people that Shahjahan must have come by a handy ready made mausoleum Why else would he disturb and remove a body well laid to rest and have it carried to Agra, 600 miles away He wouldn't want it to be transferred from one open grave to another without some purpose Even a commoner's body is not so trifled with let alone that of a queen—and believed to be a very beloved one at that. Such careful checking at every stage so essential for accurate historical research has been lacking in the field of Indian history

The body of Mumtaz was removed (if at all) from Burhanpur only because Jaisingh's palace had by that time been commandeered for her re burial in Agra The site chosen for her burial in Agra had immense verdant grounds (*Sabz Zamini*—as the *Badshahnama* terms it) This shows that the place had also a lush planted royal garden around Mansingh's palace. Inside those grounds was Mansingh's mansion (*manzil*) which was then in the possession of his grandson Jaisingh—says the *Badshahnama*

It should be noted that Raja Mansingh's mansion does not necessarily mean one built by him It only

means that during Jaisingh's times it was known as Mansingh's mansion because Mansingh was its last famous occupant. That was an ancient Hindu building that had ultimately devolved on Mansingh and then on Jaisingh Here it must also be remembered that the Taj Mahal did not necessarily devolve on Man singh through the direct line of descent Such man sions like any other piece of property changed hands by transfer sale, gifting away, dowry conquest or exchange. From time to time that ancient Hindu building passed into various hands and was at times under the occupation of the Muslim conquerors, as we shall explain hereafter

On arrival in Agra Mumtaz's body was buried un derneath the dome of Mansingh's palatial mansion under royal command, says the *Badshahnama*. Earlier it tells us that though Jaisingh regarded the take over of his highly valued ancestral palace for royal use as a matter of great honour done to him, yet out of religious scruples it was considered fit to give him Sharifabad in exchange It is not known whether this Sharifabad ' was a village or an open plot of land or rocky waste or a mere phantom name to adorn the record to make naked usurpation respectable at least on paper Some have interpreted "Sharifabad ' to signify an open piece of land. But there is no basis for such conjecture In fact the suffix "—abad ' signi fies a populated place But since such a township can not be identified as having been given over to Jaisingh historians have taken the liberty to misinterpret "Sha rifabad ' as an open plot of land Making confusion worse confounded they have further assumed base-lessly, that Shahjahan too obtained an open plot of land in exchange Why should Shahjahan exchange one

plot of land for another? If he did why would he not mention the location of the plot given to Jaisingh? Moreover the *Badshahnama* clearly asserts that it was Jaisingh who was given Sharifabad (whatever that may mean) while Shahjahan got Mansingh's garden palace in exchange This is one more detail proving how the entire Shahjahan legend of the Taj Mahal is wholly fictitious from beginning to end

Obviously this exchange is mere eyewash Who would bear with any equanimity a fabulous building being exchanged for an open piece of land? Secondly, the exchange itself sounds a mere myth because the location and dimensions of the plot of land given are not mentioned Thirdly, there was no love lost between Shahjahan an overbearing Muslim fanatic potentate and his nobles especially when they were Hindus It seems more probable that Jaisingh was just unceremoniously ousted from his ancestral palace

For three hundred long years humanity all over the world has been duped into believing that Shahjahan acquired a piece of open land from Jaisingh This again should have induced some re thinking at least amongst students of history Why should Shahjahan, an emperor, need to beg an open plot of land from a subservient nobleman? Did not Shahjahan possess vast lands himself? He robbed Jaisingh of a magnificent palace which was considered fit to bury his queen in

The palace had a dome underneath which, the author of the *Badshahnama* tells us, Mumtaz's body was hidden (i e buried) from the eyes of the world by the officials of the realm at Shahjahan's command Such command again was unnecessary unless Mumtaz had to be buried in somebody else's property The

use of the word command is thus significant. We shall show that 104 years earlier Emperor Babur also refers to this domed palace

The mention of the dome is of far reaching importance to refute the false notion entrenched in Indian history and architectural and civil engineering text books that the dome is a Muslim form of architecture The *Badshahnama* clearly tells us that the Hindu palace taken over for Mumtaz s burial had a dome Incidentally the edifice is also described as a lofty sky high mansion though those adjectives have been also interlinked with Shahjahan s courage and valour

Since the Taj Mahal has been admitted to be a Hindu palace capped with a dome it should not be difficult to comprehend that the so called mausoleums of Akbar at Sikandra and of Humayun and Safdar jang in Delhi which have been often compared with the Taj Mahal are all[3] erstwhile Hindu palaces conquered and converted into Muslim tombs

Line 40 in the above passage says that the Emperor engaged geometricians and architects for the project This does not in the least prove that he had a mausoleum constructed from the foundation upward Geometricians and architects were needed to plan the digging of the grave in the centre of the basement chamber and raise a cenotaph exactly over it in the centre of the octagonal throne room on the ground floor of the commandeered Hindu palace The architects and geometricians were also needed to guide the removal of some marble stones, have Koranic

[3] This point has been more fully dealt with in chapter II of my book *Some Blunders of Indian Historical Research* published in July 1966

extracts engraved on them in lettering of various sizes depending on the height at which they were to be refixed and to put them in position

The words ' foundation was laid ' in line 40 are also self-explanatory They are meaningful not in one but two senses. Firstly, since a corpse is always interred in a pit, filling up the ditch over the body is ' laying the foundation of the grave' Secondly it has also a figurative meaning By burying the body in a Hindu palace, Shahjahan in a way laid the foundation of a Muslim grave. Such figurative but meaningful use of the term "laying the foundation ' is not at all uncommon One could say for instance that by his conquests Napoleon laid the foundation of the French empire Does this mean that Napoleon ordered some brick, mortar or stone for the edifice of the French empire? Similarly Shahjahan ' laid the foundation" of his wife s grave without ordering any building material because he had chosen to commandeer a ready fabulous palace.

It is such logical and legal interpretations we would like to recommend to all historians Hitherto they have been used to gloss over inconvenient words and phrases ignore significant passages make fantastic assumptions, hover in a world of unreality twist the ordinary and natural meaning of words and phrases, shut one's eyes altogether to logic and legal sifting of evidence and to put pathetic faith in forgeries and falsehoods. Such slipshod and unsatisfactory methods will have to be given up if Indian history has to be rid of its many mistaken concepts and shibboleths

About the sum of four million rupees (Rs 40 lakh) that the *Badshahnama* tells us was expended on the

building the explanation is simple At the outset we would like to apprise the reader of the weakness of Muslim chroniclers for exaggerating[4] figures to boost the glory of their royal patrons Allowing for that margin of exaggeration we may assume that the actual expenditure estimated to be expended may have been in the neighbourhood of three million rupees

Thereafter we have to consider another factor In the corruption rampant during Moghul times the estimates given to the sovereign for such projects included a large percentage of overhead unauthorized profits of innumerable middlemen Making due allowance for such inflated estimates we may assume that the actual expenses should have been in the neighbourhood of two million rupees

The two million rupees (or even four million for that matter) could be easily spent on digging and filling up a grave in the basement raising a cenotaph in the ground floor central octagonal chamber covering them with costly mosaic of precious stones to match and merge with the palace flooring, and engraving the Koran on the walls of the palace The engraving necessitated raising a huge scaffolding to the towering height of the palace around its massive girth and its many lofty gateways and arches Such mosaic flooring and Koranic engraving necessitated the removal of the stone pitching of the Hindu palace at places and replacing it. New stones had also to be

[4] P 253 Elliot and Dowson, Vol VI. It is stated "De Sacy also mentions the exaggerated account of property and expenditure as to the number of elephants, horses etc and the *cost of buildings* and such like, in the *Memoirs* (of Jehangir) translated by Price compared with the more moderate statements given in Anderson's extracts."

ordered to replace those which chipped off or broke in this tampering and tinkering Hiring of highly paid artisans, ordering of stone from great distances and raising of a costly scaffolding accounts for the expenditure mentioned by the *Badshahnama*

We shall quote in the next chapter the French merchant visitor Tavernier to testify that the scaffolding cost much more than the entire work done. This would prove that the work done was the comparatively insignificant lettering at precarious heights on the walls of the Taj Mahal

We wonder on what authority later writers have placed the cost of the so-called construction of the Taj Mahal at anywhere upto Rs 90 17 million (Rs. 9 crores and 17 lakhs) when Shahjahan's own court chronicler Mulla Abdul Hamid places it at only Rs 40 lakhs (four million rupees) It is such untenable evidence blindly admitted by flouting rules of methodology that has riddled Indian history with errors, of which perhaps the most monstrous concerns the origin of the Taj Mahal

TAVERNIER

HAVING NOTED in the preceding chapter that Shahjahan's own court chronicler admits the Taj Mahal to be a domed Hindu palace commandeered for queen Mumtaz's burial, we propose to prove in this chapter that the French traveller Tavernier's testimony too, fully corroborates our conclusion and proves the traditional Shahjahan legend to be baseless Tavernier visited India during Emperor Shahjahan's time He has left us some notes on the Taj Mahal which should be useful in arriving at the truth about the origin of that mansion

Before examining his testimony let us first get introduced to him The *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* tells us* —

"Jean Baptiste Tavernier a French jeweller, toured India for trade between 1641 and 1668 A D His travel account is mainly devoted to commerce While returning home he travelled via Africa He used to sojourn at Surat and Agra (while in India) He visited all parts of India including Bengal Gujarat Punjab Madras Karnatak, etc He even toured Afghanistan and Iran He visited Golconda when Mirjumla was the Chief Minister (there) He owned a vehicle. He

* Pp. T3-4 *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* Vol 14 edited by Dr S V Ketkar & Associates and published in 1925 by the Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh Mandal Ltd., from 841 Sadashiv Peth, Poona 2 (India) 22 volumes

had to spend Rs 600 for the cart and pair of bullocks 'The bullocks used to cover 40 miles a day for two months at a stretch Four days were enough for the journey from Surat to Agra or Golconda and the expense used to be between Rs. 40| and Rs 50 • The roads were as good as Roman highways. European travellers felt inconvenienced in Hindu territories for want of meat which was freely available in Muslim dominions. A good postal system was in vogue Both the town folk and the government used to provide protection against highway robbery is the kind of information that Tavernier has recorded (in his book titled *Travels in India.*) Not being learned he has not recorded much except where wealth and com merce was concerned He has recorded lists of India's regional products. His book has been translated into English In his book one gets a glimpse of the middle part of (Emperor) Aurangzeb s regime and a small portion of Shivaji s rule. (Bibliography — Mohommaden Rule Sir Jadunath Sarkar's—*Shivaji and his Times Indian Travellers*)

In the above passage which tells us who Tavernier was there are three points significant for our discus sion One is that Tavernier was in India from 1641 to 1668 In this connection it may be remembered that Mumtaz had died in 1630 or 1631 That is to say Tavernier arrived in India 11 years after Mumtaz's demise We shall quote Muslim chroni cles to show that the mythical building of the Taj Mahal commenced within a few months of her death. As against that we are going to quote later that ac cording to Tavernier the work commenced and ended during his stay in India That is to say according to Tavernier no work was undertaken concerning Mum-

taz s tomb at least for 11 years after her death since Tavernier arrived in India only in 1641 According to some Muslim accounts which we shall quote the Taj Mahal was complete starting from the foundations, by 1643 Readers may note this glaring inconsistency between the Muslim and Tavernier s version Some of the former say that the Taj Mahal was complete by 1643 while Tavernier tells us that the work concerning the mausoleum was not even begun by at least 1641 We shall quote the relevant versions later The other point to be noted in the above quoted extract is that Tavernier not being a scholar his attention was concentrated primarily on wealth and commerce

The third point is that though Tavernier was in India until 1668 Shahjahan had been deposed and incarcerated by his son Emperor Aurangzeb in 1658. That is to say if we go by Tavernier s testimony the work concerning Mumtaz s mausoleum commenced some time after 1641 and should have ended at the latest by 1658 when Shahjahan became a helpless prisoner of his own son But we shall show that Tavernier also notes that the work took 22 years to complete That means that even if the work began immediately after Tavernier s arrival in India it ended only in 1663 This was impossible since Shahjahan was no longer on the throne after 1658

Such glaring anomalies in the traditional Taj Mahal legend have never before attracted anybody s attention. That proves that no real research has been done regarding the origin of the Taj Mahal. A long line of scholars has remained content with merely quoting the several inconsistent versions without ever trying to sort them out or reconcile them.

We shall now quote* the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* for a more thorough acquaintance with Tavernier

"Tavernier, Jean Baptiste (1605-1689) French traveller and pioneer of trade with India, was born in 1605 at Paris where his father Gabriel and uncle Melchiner, Protestants from Antwerp pursued the profession of geographers and engravers He had already travelled much in Europe and was well acquainted with the principal European courts when he started from Regenburg with two French fathers M de Chapen and M de St. Lieban for the Levant In their company he reached Constantinople early in 1631, where he spent 11 months and then proceeded by Tokal, Erzerum and Erivan to Persia. His farthest point in this first journey was Isfahan He returned by Baghdad, Aleppo to Alexandria Malta and Italy, and was again in Paris in 1633 In Sept 1638 he began a second journey (1638-43) by Aleppo to Persia and thence to India as far as Agra and Golconda His visit to the Court of the Great Mogul and to the diamond mines was connected with the plans realised more fully in his later voyages in which Tavernier traded in costly jewels and other precious wares, among the greatest princes of the East The second journey was followed by four others In his third (1643-49) he went as far as Java and returned by the Cape in his last three voyages (1651-55 1657 62, 1664-68) he did not proceed beyond India In 1669 he received letters of nobility and in 1670 purchased the barony of Aubonne near Geneva.

* P 836 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1964 Ed Vol 21

The closing years of Tavernier's life are obscure. He left Paris for Switzerland in 1687. In 1689 he passed through Copenhagen, on his way to Persia through Moscow and in that year he died at Moscow."

TAVERNIER'S ACCOUNT OF THE TAJ

AFTER HAVING acquainted ourselves in the previous chapter with Tavernier and the fact that he has left us some account of Mumtaz's mausoleum we shall first quote what he has to say about it Later we shall quote other versions to show that being all figments of imagination and concoctions, they disagree with one another in every detail

This is what Tavernier has recorded[1] "Of all the tombs which one sees at Agra that of the wife of Shahjahan is the most splendid He purposely made it near the *Tasimacan* where all foreigners come so that the whole world should see and admire The *Tasimacan* is a large bazar consisting of six large courts, all surrounded with porticos under which there are chambers for the use of merchants and an enormous quantity of cotton is sold there I witnessed the commencement and accomplishment of this great work on which they expended 22 years during which twenty thousand men worked incessantly This is sufficient to enable one to realise that the cost of it has been enormous *It is said that the scaffolding*

[1] Pp 109-111 *Travels in India*, Vol I by Jean Baptiste Tavernier Baron of Aubonne. Translated from the original French edition of 1676 with a biographical sketch of the author notes appendices etc. by Dr V Ball LL.D., F.R.S F.G.S in two volumes published by Macmillan & Co London 1889

alone cost more than the entire work, because from want of wood they had all to be made of brick as well as the supports of the arches This has entailed much labour and heavy expenditure Shahjahan began to build his own tomb on the other side of the river but the war which he had with his sons interrupted his plan"

We must examine the above passage very critically While examining it we must also bear in mind that the *Maharashtreeya Encyclopaedia* quoted earlier has said that Tavernier not being a scholar was only attracted by wealth and commerce

As pointed out in the earlier chapter, Mumtaz having died in 1630 or 1631, her body was first buried in Burhanpur in an open garden. After about six months (so they say) it was taken to Agra. That means Mumtaz's body was in Agra at the latest before the close of 1631 A D Now if we have to believe Tavernier that he saw the commencement of the work (after his arrival in India in 1641) the body of Mumtaz must have been lying in the open exposed to sun and rain for at least a decade. Here we are also confronted with another difficulty, namely the inconsistency between his accounts and Muslim ones. According to Muslim accounts, the earliest date by which the Taj Mahal was complete was 1643

We want to tell the reader that in this volume we shall not ignore even a single report or detail about the Taj Mahal story no matter whether it is a concoction or a reliable piece Unlike the historians before us, we shall not brush away the inconsistencies in the several accounts In fact we welcome them to show how even falsehoods and concoctions can be logically explained and reconciled with the help of

the truth Such reconciliation is possible by a logical interpretation of Muslim testimonies and those of Tavernier

Muslim accounts could be right in maintaining that Mumtaz s body was brought to Agra within a few months after her death It could only have been brought if a tomb was ready and handy It would not be brought from its repose in the grave at Burhanpur if Shahjahan had yet to dig the very foundation of the new tomb If he was to build a new tomb Mumtaz s body would have been taken to Agra for consecration in the new tomb only after a period of 12 or 13 years which we are told by some was the time taken to build the Taj Mahal

That the tomb was ready in the shape of a commandeered Hindu palace we have already proved by quoting earlier Shahjahan's own court chronicler Mulla Abdul Hamid

The period of six months that had to elapse before Mumtaz s body was taken to Agra from Burhanpur is explained by the time taken in getting the palace vacated by its lawful owner Jaisingh and digging a pit in its basement for Mumtaz s burial

On arrival in Agra as Shahjahan s court chronicler tells us, Mumtaz was buried under the lofty dome of Mansingh s palace then in the possession of his grandson Jaisingh According to that account no time was lost between the arrival of the body in Agra and its burial under the lofty Hindu domed palace Apparently therefore, Muslim accounts of the building of the Taj Mahal are all concoctions. We shall prove them to be so by analysing them in detail

Having buried Mumtaz's exhumed body in the Hindu palace at Agra, Shahjahan need not have been in any hurry to make further changes. The workmen whose names occur in Muslim accounts are of those who dug the grave in the basement, erected a cenotaph on the ground floor and etched Koranic extracts on the walls of the Taj Mahal and on its arches To this extent the names of designers and workmen found in the various accounts may be genuine.

As for Tavernier's statement that he saw the "commencement and accomplishment of this great work" he clearly implied that the work was nothing more than framing the whole of the lofty palace inside and out in intricate scaffolding, inscribing Koranic extracts on the walls, and then dismantling the scaffolding This is clear from his very illuminating statement that "the cost of the scaffolding itself was more than that of the entire work" Had Shahjahan constructed the Taj Mahal as we see it today it would be absurd for any visitor like Tavernier to say that the cost of the scaffolding was more than that of the entire work. The cost of the scaffolding far from exceeding that of the building for which it is erected, is in fact infinitesimal. Contrarily, Tavernier says that the scaffolding proved costlier That is emphatic proof that the "entire work" consisted of nothing but the comparatively insignificant engraving of the Koran digging burial pits and erecting a grave and a cenotaph We thus see how all inconsistencies and even concoctions can be explained away with the help of the truth.

As for Muslim accounts being *concoctions*, we have a long line of eminent historians like the late Sir H.

M. Elliot[a], Dr Tessitori and Dr S. M. Sen[b] to tell us that those accounts must not be relied upon.

Tavernier, like all European visitors to India during Muslim rule, records court gossip when he says, as noted above, that Shahjahan "purposely made the tomb near the bazar called *Tasmacan where all foreigners come, so that the whole world should see and admire it*". Here the question that needs to be asked is whether a reportedly inconsolably grief-stricken Shahjahan would find a sheltered, quiet spot for his wife's tomb, if he really built one, or whether he would behave like a cheap itinerant entertainer. Was he in the show business to want to get up a big show out of even his wife's death and play to the gallery?

According to Tavernier the work took 22 years to build, during that period 20,000 labourers were employed on it and the work commenced after his arrival in India. That means that the work even if started immediately on Tavernier's arrival in Agra in 1641, must have lasted until 1641 plus 22 = 1663 A.D. Remembering that Shahjahan was dethroned and imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb in 1658 Tavernier's statement is inadmissible as reliable evidence

His other assertion that 20,000 labourers were employed on a project which continued incessantly for

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[a] Elliot & Dowson, 8-volume *History* In the preface Sir H M Elliot observes' The history of the Muslim era in India "is an impudent and interested fraud"

[b] *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Allahabad Session, 1938 In his address as Sectional President, Dr S N Sen, quoting the Italian Scholar Dr Tessitori, agreed with him that the Muslim chronicles are highly unreliable and must never be taken at their word without corroboration

22 years also becomes *ipso facto* inadmissible. Even *trying to accommodate his statement as at least some* tenuous contemporary evidence we would say that 20 000 labourers working for 22 years i.e. 8030 days gives us an average of about two and one half workers a day The reader may note that Tavernier does not say that 20 000 workers worked every day for 22 years He says that 20 000 workers worked incessantly during 22 years That clearly means that 20 000 is the figure of all the labourers employed on the mausoleum during a period of 22 years Since the average *works out to about two and one half labourers a day* it is no wonder if the work of even Koranic engravings dragged on for as long as 22 years, even ignoring the absurdity noted above that Shahjahan was not even on the throne for 22 years after Tavernier's arrival.

It is no wonder that even the insignificant engravings on a commandeered Hindu palace should take 10, 12, 13, 17 or 22 years, as alleged in different accounts, because far from the prodigal Moghul that Shahjahan is made out to be he was a very miserly, haughty, overbearing monarch Even otherwise no Muslim monarch could afford to spend fabulous amounts on the death of each one of his 5 000 harem-consorts and many hundreds of other relations

Moreover, the time taken in construction is immaterial because once Mumtaz's body was safely ensconced under the *dome of the lofty and majestic Hindu palace*, what did it matter whether the engravings took any thing from 10 to 22 years? Even the very uncertainty of the periods mentioned in the numerous versions is in itself plausible evidence because we know from experience that when a usurped building is to be altered

to one's satisfaction such alterations could be spasmodically incorporated over a protracted period in the building according to the changing mood of the new occupant In this sense we say that all the periods, from 10 to 22 years mentioned by the different chroniclers may be taken to be true. Reconciling these versions we may say that the tomb mound and the cenotaph mosaic of Mumtaz took 10 years (because that is the shortest period mentioned by any writer) The Koranic engravings dragged on for 22 years. Camouflaging Hindu buildings with Muslim lettering was not Shahjahan's innovation It had a hoary tradition The Adhai Din Ka Zopda at Ajmer which was a part of Vigraharaj Vishaldeo's palace bears Islamic lettering The so-called Kutub Minar which is an ancient Hindu observatory tower has also been similarly claimed for Islam with the legerdemain of Islamic carvings on it The so-called Humayun Safdarjang and Akbar tombs though earlier Rajput palaces have met with the same fate. It is no wonder if Shahjahan carried forward this well worn tradition of his forbears and with a master stroke of imperial highhandedness robbed Jaisingh of his fabulous ancestral palace which was Shahjahan's maternal home He had a twin object in turning a gay Hindu palace into a weird Muslim tomb One was to further impoverish and humiliate a Hindu princely house and the other to appropriate the whole palace with its fabulous wealth like pearl pendants, gold canopy and railings, silver doors and the famous Peacock Throne (which was in this palace) to his own treasury

The most important and telling part of Tavernier's testimony is that the scaffolding cost more than the entire work (concerning the mausoleum) This very

enlightening and disarming piece of evidence should convince all that since a huge scaffolding had to be erected all over and around the palace complex to inscribe the Koran at precarious heights the cost of the scaffolding was bound to exceed that of the comparatively insignificant lettering

We would also like to draw the reader's attention to Tavernier's words, "Shahjahan purposely made the tomb near the *Tasimacan* (which had six large courts) where all foreigners come so that the whole world should see and admire it." The word *Tasimacan* is *Taj i macan*, i e royal residence, which is synonymous with Taj Mahal That is to say, the Hindu palace was known as *Tasimacan* alias Taj Mahal even before Mumtaz's burial, according to Tavernier He also tells us that foreigners used to flock to see that magnificent palace and that Shahjahan's object in burying Mumtaz there was precisely to cash in on the sculptural grandeur of that dreamland palace

Shahjahan is often misrepresented in Indian histories as a fabulously rich Moghul. This image of his derives from the belief that he built a number of costly buildings while he actually did not build even a single. Far from being a monarch possessing fabulous wealth Shahjahan could hardly command any resources worth the name because his near 30-year reign was marred by 48 military campaigns. Shahjahan's relative poverty is fully borne out by Tavernier's remark quoted above that from "want of wood" the scaffolding including the support of arches had all to be made of bricks. The reader may well consider whether a monarch who cannot muster even the timber necessary for a scaffolding, in a country like India which had vast stretches under dense forest can ever hope or dream of order

ing a building as magnificent and majestic as the Taj Mahal?

Tavernier s remark that Shahjahan had to use bricks even to support arches is of special significance. It means that the arches existed already It may be noted that Koranic engravings on the Taj Mahal are made around the arches. When the original stone slabs were removed by Shahjahan and replaced after the engravings or were substituted by other slabs with the Muslim lettering the arches so tampered with had to be supported with bricks So this part of Tavernier s observation also proves that the Taj Mahal with its arched entrances existed even before Mumtaz s death

When Tavernier says that the *Tasimacan* (i.e *Taz i Macan* = Taj Mahal) is a large bazar consisting of six large courts he is obviously describing the spacious red stone pavilions around excluding the marble building since it had already been appropriated for Mumtaz s burial. In fact Tavernier s account may appear confusing because while the whole world designates the marble building as the 'Taj Mahal Tavernier calls the red stone buildings as *Taz i Macan* The fact is that both the marble building and the surrounding red stone buildings constitute the *Taz i Macan* i.e. 'crown property belonging to Jaisingh. It was that entire property—the majestic magnificent palace with all its annexes—that was commandeered by Shahjahan The red stone pavilions would have no *locus standi* there without the central marble building since they are mere adjuncts of a palace.

Before we end this chapter however we want to caution the reader about the worth of Western scholars' or visitors testimony During British rule in India

there was a strong tendency to place great store by the jottings of Western observers That tendency persists even now though we are free But Keene, himself an English scholar, has made some important observations which provide a classic instance of confused minds

In a footnote on page 154 of his book Keene observes "Tavernier commenced his first voyage in 1631 and after travelling from Constantinople to Ispahan in Persia, returned to France in 1633 He did not therefore, see the commencement of the Taj but he may have heard of it at Ispahan. His fourth voyage from 1651 to 1655 was to India and it was then that he saw the completion of the Taj"

Firstly let us tell Keene how Tavernier is right. Keene does not know that since the Taj Mahal was a Hindu mansion there was nothing for Shahjahan to do except dig a trench in its basement central chamber if at all, and bury the corpse of Mumtaz there Therefore Tavernier need not have been in India in 1630-31 to witness the "commencement." What Tavernier means by saying that he saw the commencement and end of the building work is, as already explained by us, that he saw Shahjahan's labourers erect a scaffolding to inlay Koranic engravings at various heights of the Taj Mahal. This work could begin and end at any time and if it began and ended while Tavernier was in India there is nothing surprising Tavernier is therefore right

But one interesting fact which emerges from Keene's footnote is that nobody seems to know for certain as to when Tavernier was in India and for how long? While we have quoted the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* to say that Tavernier lived in India from 1641 to 1668

Keene states that Tavernier could be in India only sometime between the years 1651-1655 This indicates that Tavernier is not very reliable All that he has stated is not the truth or the whole truth If he was in India for less than four years (between 1651-1655 including the months covered by the voyage to and fro) would it be right for him to say that "20 000 labourers worked incessantly for 22 years and that the work commenced and ended in his presence."[7] This indicates that Tavernier too has bluffed the world of history regarding the Taj Mahal by recording Muslim bluffs which he only heard but passed on to posterity as first hand information.

THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA BRITANNICA ACCOUNT

EVEN THOUGH we have conclusively proved in the preceding chapters by quoting Shahjahan s own chronicler Abdul Hamid and a French visitor Tavernier that the Taj Mahal is a commandeered Hindu palace, yet in order to acquaint the reader with all the ramifications of this blind man s buff that has been going on about the Taj Mahal for 300 years we would like to discuss every aspect of it separately

As part of such a discussion we intend giving the reader in a few succeeding chapters, a sampling of the diverse and inconsistent versions of the origin of the Taj Mahal Let us first see what the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*[10] has to say

Taj Mahal the Mausoleum built on the south bank of the Jumna river outside Agra in India on the orders of the Mogul emperor Shahjahan in memory of his beloved wife, Arjumand Banu Begum called Mumtaz i Mahal chosen one of the palace (of which Taj Mahal is a corruption) She died in childbirth in the town of Burhanpur in 1631 after having been the emperor s inseparable companion since their marriage in 1612 The building was commenced in 1632, after plans had been prepared by a council of architects from India, Persia Central Asia and beyond the credit for the final plan is given to one Ustad Isa either Turkish

10 P 758 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol 21 1964 Ed

or Persian although the master builders, masons, inlayers and calligraphists, like the materials they worked with came from all over India and Central Asia. More than 20 000 workmen were employed daily to complete the Mausoleum building itself by 1643 although the whole Taj complex took 22 years to complete at a cost of 400 lakhs of rupees.

'The complex consists of a rectangle measuring 634 yds by 334 yds aligned North and South. A central square garden area 334 yds. on each side, leaves an oblong area at each end that at the south consists of the sandstone entrance gateway with its attendant service building while that at the north (river) end comprises the mausoleum itself flanked on the west and east walls by two symmetrically identified buildings the mosque and its *jawab* (answer) respectively. All is enclosed within a high red sandstone boundary wall with octagonal pavilion turrets at the corners while outside the enclosure at the south are ancillary buildings such as *stables outhouses and guard quarters*. The whole complex is the begum s memorial. It was conceived and planned as an entity since Mogul building practice allowed of no subsequent addition or amendment. Its northern end is the most significant architecturally with mosque and *jawab* both facing the mausoleum itself. The mosque and *jawab* of red Sikri sandstone with marble necked (not bulbous) domes and architraves and some restrained *pietra dura* surface decoration contrast well with the mausoleum of pure white Makrana marble. This mausoleum standing on 312 ft. square marble plinth 23 ft. high is a square of 186 ft. with chamfered corners and with a massive arch in each face rising to 108 ft. all is a bulbous double dome supported on a

tall drum the pinnacle of which stands 243 ft. above garden level The sky line rhythm is enhanced by parapets over each arch corner pinnacles and domed kiosks over each corner At each corner of the plinth stands a three-storied minaret, 138 ft. high to the crowning kiosk the countersunk face joints of the marble bricks provide textural contrast with the highly finished marble of the mausoleum but unfortunately recall factory chimney construction to the sophisticated Western beholder Inside the mausoleum is the octagonal chamber embellished with low relief patterns and fine *pietra dura* containing the cenotaph of the begum and Shahjahan These of marble decorated with superb *pietra dura* are enclosed by an exquisite perforated marble screen studded with precious stones A vault below at garden level, contains the true sarcophagi

The minarets lead the observer s eye from the mausoleum to its setting, this is now somewhat unsatisfactory as trees obscure the view of other structures and from the garden there is some feeling of restlessness but from the river or from the fort the balance restores itself and justifies H R Nevil s remark that the Taj is within more measurable distance of perfection than any other work of man" (Agra Gazetteer 1971) Its design successor in the indigenous tradition to the mausoleums of Humayun and the Khanan at Delhi has been criticised as too feminine—thus complimenting the designers intentions. The Moguls are said to have built like Titans and finished like goldsmiths Certainly The Taj Mahal is their finest jewel

See Islamic Architecture.

Bibliography—Percy Brown, Monuments of the Moghul Period, *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. IV (1937)
Indian Architectures, The Islamic Period of (1942)
For the controversy over the attribution of the design to a European, see S A. Smith—*History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon* Pp. 182-185 (1930)
E. B Havell *A Handbook to Agra and the Taj* Appendix New Ed. (1924)"

In the opening part of the extract, the reader may note the explanation given of Arjumand Banu Begum's title Mumtaz Mahal, the title meaning chosen one of the palace (of which the Taj Mahal is a corruption) This explanation clearly shows that the title stuck to the queen after her death because a (Hindu) palace was "chosen" for the burial. We have quoted Shah jahan's official chronicle to show that while Mumtaz was alive her name was not "Mumtaz Mahal but "Mumtaz-ul Zamani" Accounts like the one in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which presume that the term "Taj Mahal" is a contraction of the lady s name "Mumtaz Mahal" are wrong The lady's name was never Mumtaz Mahal She got that name posthumously when she was buried in a palace Thus, far from the building getting its name from the lady it is the lady who has acquired the name from the commandeered Hindu palace So irresistible was the beauty, magnificence, majesty and fame of the commandeered Hindu palace that Shahjahan's dead queen got a new posthumous name from the scintillating building.

The *Encyclopaedia* places the death of Mumtaz in 1631 while we will show later that Muslim accounts place it in 1630 So even the date of Mumtaz's death is uncertain Naturally, therefore, all subsequent dates of her exhumed body being carried to Agra, and of

the mythical building of the Taj Mahal are concoctions. This should convince the reader of the utter unreliability of Muslim chroniclers with regard to even such simple and definite matters as important dates. This point also illustrates how every aspect of the Taj Mahal story is suspect.

The *Encyclopaedia* mentions 1632 as the year in which the building of the Taj Mahal was commenced. In the extract from the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* (Encyclopaedia) which we are going to quote in the next chapter the year of the commencement of the Taj Mahal is stated to be 1631. Such subsequent inconsistencies are inevitable when the initial date of Mumtaz's death is itself unknown.

Equally loosely, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* asserts that "plans had been prepared by a council of architects from India, Persia, Central Asia and beyond."

The above assertion needs to be closely examined. Assuming 1631 as the year of Mumtaz's death we would like to ask whether in those days of bullock cart and camel transport it was conceivable that architects in remote parts of the world could be chosen, contacted, explained the king's idea of a fabulous tomb, a council established to finalize the plan, the material and labour collected and the building work begun, all within one year or even less than a year? No scholar or writer seems to have subjected the diverse versions of the Taj Mahal to the close scrutiny it needs.

We would further like to point out that the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* (Encyclopaedia) to be quoted in the next chapter does not mention a council of

architects but says that, of several plans ordered from different architects, one was chosen

Another point is that Emperor Shahjahan's own chronicler, in the passage quoted earlier does not mention any blueprint or architect He is right, and the Encyclopaedic account false, because as said by him, Mumtaz was buried in a ready made palace. If a plan had actually been made it should have been found among Shahjahan's court papers, but it is not there The amount of Rs 400 lakhs mentioned by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is 10 times the amount of four million rupees mentioned by Shahjahan's own official chronicler Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori, quoted earlier The reader may note this as an example of how the cost of the Taj Mahal has been inflated in various accounts.

The *Encyclopaedia's* reference to ancillary buildings such as "stables, outhouses and guard quarters" is noteworthy Such ancillaries are never needed by a dead person On the contrary they are always needed in a Hindu palace or temple

The octagonal pavilion turrets mentioned in the *Encyclopaedia* are a Hindu royal tradition deriving from the *Ramayana* Rama is the ideal of Hindu kingship. His capital Ayodhya was octagonal as mentioned in Valmiki's *Ramayana* Hindu Sanskrit tradition alone has special names for all the eight directions. It also specifies special guardian deities for all the eight directions. A king is supposed to wield authority in all the 10 directions These 10 directions include the heaven above and the nether world below The pinnacle of a building points to the heaven while the building's foundation points to the nether world Thus an octagonal building along with its pinnacle and

foundation accords with the Hindu concept of the king's or God's authority extending to all the 10 directions It is therefore that orthodox Hindu constructions are octagonal. The octagonal shape of the Taj Mahal itself and of its pavilion turrets thus proves it to be out and out Hindu in design. In Muslim tradition an octagon has no significance.

Encyclopaedia Britannica is wrong in terming the four marble towers around the Taj Mahal as "minarets" Muslim minarets are always part of the building These ones which are detached from the main marble building are Hindu pillars or towers. They must not be called minarets In Hindu tradition every sacred plinth must be framed up with corner towers lest it be mistaken for a sepulchre.

THE MAHARASHTREEYA JNYANKOSH ACCOUNT

HAVING EARLIER seen what the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* has to say about the Taj Mahal let us now compare with it the account given by the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* (Encyclopaedia) and see whether they tally

The *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* says[1] —

The Taj Mahal is reckoned as the most beautiful building in the world It is located on the western bank of the Jamuna river about three miles from Agra City Twenty thousand workmen laboured to build it. The building testifies to the excellence that Indian architecture had then attained

In 1607 A D when Shahjahan was fifteen years old (his father Emperor) Jahangir engaged him to Arjumand Bano alias Mumtaz Mahal Five years later the two were married She died at Burhanpur in 1631 A D Shahjahan grieved her loss so much that he did not attend court for eight days He used to sob inconsolably near his wife s tomb She was first buried in Burhanpur but her body was exhumed and taken to Agra To the south of Agra Raja Jaisingh had some landed estate The Emperor purchased it from him and called for building plans from eminent architects One of them was approved and a wooden model of it was got prepared Construction of the building as per the model commenced early in 1631

[1] Pp 35 36 Vol 15 *Maharashtreeya Jnyakosh* ibid

A.D and ended in January 1643 A D Makamal Khan and Abdul Karim were the two chief supervisors. The building cost Rs 50 00 000 Afridi asserts it cost Rs. 91,700,000 and the following were the workers — Amanat Khan Shirazi Essa mason Pira carpenter, Bannuhar, Zatmulla and Zorawar, Ismail Khan Rumi built the dome and its paranchic (sic), Ramlal Kashmiri Bagwan, etc. *Stone of twenty best varieties has* been used in the building The Emperor entered the Taj Mahal in 1643 A D and assigned thirty surrounding towns yielding Rs. 100 000 revenue for the upkeep of the surrounding serais, shops and garden

"Adjoining the building is a garden. The entrance gate to it has a peculiar kind of filigree work done on it At the farther end of the garden is the Taj Mahal. A pathway bordered by Suru trees on either side leads along a number of fountains to the Taj Mahal. *There are also rectangular cisterns. Inside the gate* are arched paired corridors The main building, its towers and the neighbouring smaller buildings have been wrought in marble It is white but has a greyish tinge. First is the plinth and then an open ground enclosed by a wall In that, slate-like stone (chips) has been embedded in the marble (wall pitching) to inlay extracts from the Koran. At the front of the arch is a marble Toda (sic) and the walls are decorated with diverse kinds of filigree work.

jahan's cenotaph They don't contain (the royal couple's) remains. The real tombs are in the basement Around the cenotaphs was a golden canopy of magnificent workmanship containing flowers and bouquets wrought from gems But it is said that Aurangzeb dismantled the canopy Even the present marble trellised canopy is spectacular The floor and the walls have excellent mosaic The mosaic is done by imbedding coloured stone in marble. The mosaic even depicts the variation in colour on the back and front of a (green) leaf by using different shades of stone The coloured stone depicts floral and arboreal variety *At some places real* (precious) *stone may still be noticed* (This last sentence bears out that Koranic extracts have been inlaid by tampering with the old Hindu palace—*Author*)

"The building (dome) reverberates sound in a deep rumble. Since the building has rooms all round and (small) ventilators the central chamber is dimly lit That tempers a feeling of solitude by creating an illusion of an unseen multitude moving about (inside)

"The real graves are in the basement. The custom of duplicate graves in the basement and ground floor originated among the Egyptians. The real graves are comparatively simple while the upper ones are adorned with a rich mosaic From the upper floor (galleries) one can get a view of the cenotaphs beneath Spacious apartments around the cenotaphs and a lofty arched entrance form part of the building. The round dome seen in pictures is in fact oval Architects show a great preference for this shape

"There are four towers at the corners of the main building. Their girth may be 60 65 feet Their base is octagonal but the towers are round They are five

storeyed and should be at least 150 ft high each The main building is flanked by two smaller buildings also domed They have rounded corners and beautiful arched windows. The real beauty of the building can not be adequately described The building has to be seen It is rarely that one comes across a building of such beauty, it is profusely ornamented with proportionate inlay work (embossed or carved designs etc) In building it Shahjahan's money flowed like water to adorn it with captivating artistry The building is lofty, enchanting proportionate and attractive and looks as though it was built but yesterday

'On one flank of the Taj Mahal is a verandah for reciting *namaz* It has six arm length marble and red stone seats numbering one thousand A channel dug from the Yamuna river feeds an excellently built four-storeyed well for water sports'

Comparing the two encyclopaedia accounts obviously based on some of the most handy concoctions available to their respective writers we find that they greatly differ from each other

The vacant estate referred to above is a misconception since Shahjahan's court chronicler asserts that it was Mansingh's lofty palace set amidst a majestic garden that was chosen for Mumtaz's burial

The *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* asserts that Shahjahan called for plans from different eminent architects and selected one As against this the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* wants us to believe that it was a council of architects who jointly planned the monument

Here we would like to ask which were the architectural schools where these architects studied or taught Where are their architectural text books to be found

in ancient or mediaeval Muslim literature? As against this we can list scores of texts of the ancient Hindu systems of architecture and civil engineering. We shall also prove subsequently how the Taj Mahal answers to Hindu specifications in every detail.

The other question that a true researcher must ask himself is whether even a single blueprint, among, may be, the dozens tendered, is available among Shahjahan's court papers. Along with those blueprints should also be thousands of receipts given for the material received, the day to-day expense account of the amounts spent on the Taj Mahal and the labourers' muster roll. How is it that not even a scrap of paper, of the kinds described above, is available?

While the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* mentions only one name—Ustad Isa, the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* far from making any reference to it, mentions those of Makamat Khan, Abdul Karim and a few others.

It should be particularly noted that the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh*, like the *Badshahnama*, does not mention any architect.

While the period of construction is mentioned as 22 years in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, it is stated to be only 12 years in the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh*. Obviously the former relies on Tavernier while the other, on one of the many imaginative Muslim accounts.

As regards the cost the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* somehow chooses the figure of Rs. 400 lakhs while the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* is unable to decide between the claims made in different concocted versions from Rs. 5 millions to Rs. 90.17 millions. We are at a loss to know why and on what authority they reject or disbelieve the figure of Rs. 4 million given

by Shahjahan's official chronicler or how they do not happen even to mention it.

It may be noted that both the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* harp on "20 000 labourers" As we have shown earlier it is Tavernier who claims that 20 000 labourers were employed The fact that the encyclopaedias have to rely on Tavernier's figure shows that Shahjahan's court records make no mention of any labourers or at least of any sizeable labour force This is a glaring anomaly Shahjahan's court papers should have had a regular muster roll of the huge number of labourers who are supposed to have toiled for years on end in building the Taj Mahal The absence of any such record is a clear indication that Shahjahan did not build the Taj Mahal. He only buried Mumtaz in a commandeered mansion. Tavernier was only a casual foreign visitor His figure is only hearsay gathered from bluffing chauvinistic Muslim hangers-on at Shahjahan s court who were interested in boosting Muslim "achievements"

A RECENT CONCOCTION OF THE SHAHJAHAN LEGEND

A REMARKABLE instance of how the antecedents of the Taj Mahal continue to be a free for all theme for all writers even to our own day is provided by an article published [1] in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* recently

We shall first reproduce the whole article and then comment on it The article a typed copy of which was provided to us by a friend is as follows

THE BUILDERS OF THE TAJ MAHAL
Ancient Secret Revealed

TOURISTS come from the world over to see the Taj at Agra and all marvel at the genius of the architects that could plan and accomplish so lovely a dream in marble They were commissioned by the Mogul Emperor Shah Jehan to raise a mausoleum befitting his love for Mumtaz Mahal his beloved consort and they created this Wonder of the World

Yet despite strenuous efforts to discover it their identity had remained a mystery wild guesses as to their origin being foreign were abroad Even Bernier (1662 A D) notes only a rumour that the archi

[1] Article titled *The Builders of the Taj Mahal—Ancient Secret Revealed* by Mohamed Khan published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay dated April 4 1965

tect was killed lest the secret of his art be revealed and a rival to the Taj created

'But the secret has at long last been found in a manuscript book discovered lately in the library of Mr *Mahmud Khan of Bangalore* The glory of building the Taj belongs definitely to India to a family of Lahore architects Ahmad the father and his three sons The book is in Persian verses in the Persian character its author being Lathfullah Mahandis him self one of the three son architects and it is almost 300 years old falling within the last years of Shah Jehan s reign

It has been declared to be the only copy in the world by the well known authority on these matters Syed Suleiman Sahib Nadvi Principal Shibley Aca demy Azamgarh

The book is in Mahardis own handwriting As is noticed from different verses, the author was a staunch follower of Dara Shikoh Shah Jehan s eldest son and when Aurangzeb finally came to power after defeating Dara Shikoh the author and his family suffered He sent a petition to the Emperor (page 67) but as it was not heeded the family had to retire into seclusion and poverty (page 68)

It seems that the book was very secretly kept by the family in fear of Aurangzeb as it contained verses in praise of Dara Shikoh The subsequent dates and writing on the last page show that the book was *brought and was kept in the library of that historical* personage Nawab Ebrahim Khan Hazbar Jung, the famous Mahomedan general nicknamed Gardy who sided with the Maharatas in the battle of Panipat in 1761 against Ahmed Shah Abdali The book has *been in the family* of the present owner for genera

tions, but it was not noticed until Moulana Syed Suleiman Nadvi, the well known historian, author and editor of the Moariff (the monthly journal of the Society of Authors and Shibly Academy, Azamgarh, U P) discovered it and, on information gleaned from it, read a lengthy Urdu paper on the builders of the Taj in the Punjab University

"*In the verses in two pages of the book described* in the article the author praises Shah Jehan, and speaks of his father Ahmed, the 'Nadar ul-Asar' (the unique of the world) as supreme master craftsman, geometer, astronomer and prosateur He was appointed Court Architect by Shah Jehan s Royal Warrant, and was *the builder of the Taj Mahal at Agra and the Lal Qila (Red Fort) at Delhi* He died in 1649, two years after the Taj was built The author, his son and co-architect of the Taj learnt at his feet"

According to this version the Taj Mahal was completed within 16 to 17 years of Arjumand Banu Begum's death and not 12, 13 or 22 years as the earlier version's assert

We fully agree with the learned writer Mr Mohamed Khan that "despite strenuous efforts to discover the identity of the architects that could plan and accomplish so lovely a 'dream in marble' their identity has remained a mystery"

That means that the names given in the encyclopaedias quoted above are not considered reliable by anybody Had they been considered reliable, nobody would have bothered to continue the search for the "real" names The search will never end because it is proceeding in the wrong direction This unending search is itself proof that Shahjahan did not build the Taj Mahal Had he really built it the names

of the architects and all the other valid details would have found a place in contemporary chronicles and his own official chronicle

But despite the unauthenticity of the differing names mentioned by the encyclopaedias in describing the Taj Mahal we do not blame the encyclopaedias. Their accounts are obviously based on the diverse imaginery versions recorded in a number of Muslim accounts like Mohammad Amin Kazwini s *Padshahnama*, Abdul Hamid Lahori s *Badshahnama*, Inayat Khan s *Shahjahan nama* Mohommad Waris s *Badshahnama*, Mahommad Salih Kambu s *Amal i-Salih* Mahomad Sadik Khan s *Shahjahan nama* Mahommad Sharif Hanif's *Majlis us Salatin*, Mufazzal Khan s *Tarikh i Mufassali* Bakhtawar Khan s *Mirat-i Alam* and also his *Mirat i Jahan numa*, Azizulla's *Zinat ul Tawarikh* and Rai Bhara Mulla s *Lubbut Tawarikh i Hind* and the *Diwan i Afridi*

All the above Muslim chronicles are, according to Sir H. M. Elliot and almost all Western scholars, "an impudent and interested fraud

Since the encyclopaedia writers banked on these frauds it is no wonder that they and through them their readers too have been badly duped not only over the origin of the Taj Mahal but in relation to the entire range of mediaeval history

Getting back to Mr Mohamed Khan s article, which we are examining in this chapter we find him observing wild guesses as to their (architects) origin being foreign were abroad Here we might like to suggest a slight amendment. The wild guesses he refers to apply not only to foreign names but to all of Shah jahan s contemporaries—including natives. That is to say, even the local Muslim (or for that matter even

Hindu) names being mentioned are products of fertile guesses

We ask, what right anybody has to make guesses when Shahjahan's own court chronicler mentions no designer?

'Even Bernier," adds Mr Mohamed Khan "notes only a rumour that the architect was killed lest the secret of his art be revealed and a rival to the Taj be created"

Here we would like to tell all readers and students of history to remember one handicap of Western visitors during Muslim rule in India The Muslim court being a parasitical graft deriving its sustenance from the sap of plunder and massacre, it exuded nothing but falsehoods and rumours Even ordinary talk was all bluff and bluster The Western visitors at Muslim Courts had willy nilly to record the facile and facetious replies they got from hangers-on at the court

When, therefore, poor gullible Tavernier asked to be shown the master architect of the Taj Mahal he was effectively silenced and put off by being told that the designer was murdered so that he may not build a rival Taj Mahal for any rival of Shahjahan A myriad questions jump to the surface of our minds on reading this absurd plea.

At the outset, of course we agree that the fictitious "designer" of the Taj Mahal could be 'murdered" with the same facility with which he was "created" Writers of shilling shockers often create and kill some of their characters with a mere flourish of their pen There is no reason why wagging tongues at Shahjahan's court need have been lagging in this art

One of the questions which arises is, why was not Tavernier told at least the name of the murdered man so that he could have recorded it for posterity Or is it argued that even the name was 'murdered'?

The second question is whether raising a Taj Mahal is mere fun so that anybody could get up and book the same architect for building another Taj Mahal? Why should Shahjahan dread such an eventuality? Who had the money to build another Taj Mahal? We are going to prove in the succeeding pages that even Shahjahan himself did not possess the means to order a building half as beautiful majestic and spacious as this ancient Hindu palace-cum temple known to us as the Taj Mahal

The third question is whether Shahjahan was playing to the gallery or seeking a cheap exclusive architectural patent for the Taj Mahal in wanting to forestall and foreclose other claims or was he a genuine inconsolably bereaved spouse? Once we are told (by Tavernier) that Shahjahan buried Mumtaz close to a bazar to win public approbation Then we are told that he murdered the architect to prevent him from obliging some other likely grand Moghul in building a rival monument All this makes us wonder whether Shahjahan was a dignified emperor or a clown of some Shakespearean play with his hand on dead Mumtaz s pulse and his eye fixed on public acclaim

Yet another question is whether Shahjahan so soft hearted as to squander all his wealth on a dreamland monument for his wife would at once turn so wild and treacherous as to execute the very architect who gave a concrete form to his dream?

Another doubt which arises is whether Shahjahan had planned to live in sack cloth and ashes after ex

pending all his wealth in immortalising a corpse?

Such are the abounding absurdities which should reveal themselves to any matter of fact man-of the world *historian*

The amount of gullibility that has gone into the writing of Indian history is astounding

The detective like approach the lawyer like questioning logical reasoning and all such guidelines prescribed by renowned methodologists like Renier, Walsh and Collingwood have been completely ignored and a sham history is offered to us which can be torn to pieces with a little close questioning

The author of the article Mr Mohamed Khan claims that ' the secret has at last been found We wish he really had found it We are ready to accept a part of the implication of his claim namely that all the books and accounts hitherto ascribing the creation of the Taj *Mahal to other architects are false But as for the second part of his claim that his version is the last word on the matter we are afraid it is untenable*

Still we attach great value to his discovery of the manuscript in the library of Mr Mahmud Khan of Bangalore because it further supports very firmly the assertion we had made long back Our assertion is that so far as we know no historian or university has ever dared to bring together under one cover all the (fictitious) accounts of Shahjahan s sponsorship of the Taj Mahal No one could ever hope to succeed in such an undertaking It was like trying to fathom a bottomless abyss of forgeries or fencing off an ocean *of falsehoods*

What Mr Mohamed Khan has discovered therefore is *nothing but yet another fictitious account.* Any

number of such could still be discovered in any part of the world because who knows how many persons have, during the last three hundred years, had their fingers in this make-believe pie of the imaginary Shah Jahan sponsorship of the Taj Mahal

The article itself has the germs to indicate that the pie is stale stuff The very fact that the book is a hodge podge of the praise of one Moghul prince and a claim by the author of having been a master builder of the Taj Mahal along with his father and two brothers, and the fact of the book having been tucked away in a cellar for fear of Aurangzeb—all clearly proclaim that Lathfullah s account deserves to be ranked no better than the other Muslim chronicles as yet another cock and bull story

Aurangzeb was too shrewd hard hearted and hard headed an Emperor to tolerate any fantastic and fic titious claims When he knew from personal knowl edge (unlike modern historians) that the Taj Mahal was a usurped Hindu palace what Muslim mason or architect could dare curry favour with him claim ing to be its creator? It was this fact which obvi ously led Lathfullah Mahandis to beguile the tedium of an unemployed hour by writing some Persian verse and tucking away the book in a cellar to deceive and regale posterity He does not seem to have been very wrong for here we are confronted with his version and asked to believe implicitly in it as the ultimate and exclusive gospel truth and the last word on the Taj Mahal But alas, even this latest version was received by posterity coldly and dropped like a hot brick It failed to make any impression How could it hope to anyway? Any version of Shahjahan s sponsorship of the Taj Mahal will have to face a bat

tery of questions So Ahmad Mahandis' claim too has been suffered to glide silently down the drain of history by an unimpressed posterity, unwept, unsung and unheeded

Yet we are ready to concede two uses of the Lathfullah version. Its authoritarian claim is useful as a stick to beat the other equally fictitious versions with, and to turn them out of the field of history

Its other use is that we see no harm in admitting Lathfullah Mahandis' claim that he, his two brothers and their father Ahmad were among those employed by Shahjahan as grave-diggers, stone-masons, scaffolding-erectors or Koran carvers when Shahjahan had those superficial changes made in turning a commandeered Hindu palace into a grave yard

Here we also admit that the different names given in the various accounts and books on the Taj Mahal could all be true and genuine in the sense that persons bearing those names gave a hand and played a role in turning the Hindu palace into a Muslim tomb Because, the tampering enumerated above needed thousands of men of which only a few hundred names have come down to us and there is no reason why they should be untrue

But it is the role that is being foisted on them that is fictitious That is why the game has been going on merrily for the last 300 years, with the mask falling from one face only to be lustily picked up by another to parade as the real creator of the Taj Mahal

In admitting all the names included in the different versions to be those of the true workers in the palace to-tomb transformation project, we once again illustrate how the overall truth reconciles even the underlying motivated falsehoods And this is one of

the tests of the soundness of a new historical finding. A new finding, if it is the real answer, must adequately reconcile the loose ends of the older versions.

YET ANOTHER CONFUSED ACCOUNT

IN ACCORDANCE with our plan to acquaint the reader with a fair sampling of the wide variety of the traditional, confused versions of the origin of the Taj Mahal we are reproducing here another article[13] which appeared in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* The article runs thus —

"WHEN the Taj Mahal was built the many mechanical aids available today were unheard of, yet the extraordinary ingenuity employed in its construction and the high degree of engineering skill evidenced in its design make the mind pause

"Not less remarkable were the talent and skill of the artisans employed In translating this fabulous architectural dream into brick and mortar an area 967 ft long and 373 ft wide was excavated to a depth of 44 ft where sub soil water was met The whole excavated area was filled in mass with rubble stone in hydraulic lime to provide a common foundation for the three heavy structures the Taj Mahal, Jama et Khana and one mosque which were to be raised close to one another About 20 000 men were engaged on this work

"Over this foundation the plinth of the Taj Mahal 313 ft square and 8 ft high was built in stone with

[13] Article titled *Some Facts About the Taj Mahal* by Mohamed Din published in *The Illustrated Weekly of India* dated December 30 1951

hydraulic lime mortar and marble stone casing. The casing was laid after the rubble masonry was raised to its designed height.

The superstructure of the Taj consists of brick masonry in hydraulic lime mortar with marble facing. The brick work and marble facing were not taken in hand simultaneously: first the masonry was raised to its designed height and then the marble facing was set.

'The bricks used were all hand moulded and well burnt. Agra clay is excellent for bricks as it contains 50 to 60% of silica, the main clay constituent required. It is for this reason that these bricks have not deteriorated in all these years.

Spiral Roadway

'The main engineering problem was to haul up the materials to the required height during the progress of the work. This was done by constructing *wooden pillars of square timber posts bundled together* and skilfully tied with top levels at different heights, and so spaced as to carry a strong platform 40 ft. wide and a spiral roadway with a slope of 1 in 20 to permit loaded mules and mule carts to run over it, and to hold dumps of materials for construction work. This spiral platform was continuous and ran all round the dome and remained in position till the work was raised to its designed height of 240 ft. above ground level. Special engineers were engaged to build the scaffolding and platform and 500 carpenters and 300 blacksmiths were employed on this project alone. The total length of the spiral platform was about 4,800 ft. The mortar was hoisted by means of Persian

wheels which were fitted on the spiral platform These were worked by bullocks and mules, as no other mechanical means were available in those days. The heavy marble stone was hoisted by means of pulleys

"The materials for the massive work were brought from many distant places. The marble stone was obtained from Makrana in Rajputana for which about a thousand elephants were engaged The maximum weight of a block of stone was about 2½ tons, which is the safe carrying capacity of an elephant. A number of elephants were also engaged to work the pulleys, in the same way as bullocks and mules are used in many parts of India for lifting water by 'mote" for irrigation and other purposes

"The timber for scaffolding was brought from the Kashmir and Naini Tal areas About 2000 camels and 1000 bullock carts were employed for carting bricks and light materials to the construction site and about 1000 mules for lifting the materials along the spiral platform.

Marble Dome

"The marble stone required for drum and dome was dressed on the ground and then lifted and laid in position by means of the pulleys Then the stone was polished from top to bottom and the top scaffolding was simultaneously removed in portions where it was no longer required

'After the main dome and drum work was finished work on annexes and subsidiary buildings was taken in hand and completed in the same manner

'There are four minarets on the four corners of the Taj Mahal and it is interesting to note that three

of them on south east north east and north west are out of plumb by 2 and the one on south west by 8" away from the main building This was apparently done on purpose so that in case of an earthquake the minarets would not fall on the main structure but in a direction away from it

The river Jumna was half a mile away from the structure After the building was completed the river was diverted artificially to flow alongside the Taj to add to the beauty of the landscape

The whole work is marvellous and stands today as fresh as it was at the time of its completion

Contemporary Muslim writers recorded the names of those who designed and constructed the Taj Mahal and the names and quantities of precious stones used It appears that Mohamed Isa Afandi of Turkey was the chief designer and draftsman Among the other foreigners employed on the construction there were men from Arabia Persia, Syria Baghdad and Samar kand and there was at least one Frenchman Austin de Bordeaux a goldsmith

The precious stones used included 540 pieces of cornelian from Baghdad 670 turquoises from Upper Tibet 614 malachites from Russia 559 onyxes from Deccan and 625 diamonds from Central India The construction of the Taj Mahal was begun in 1632 and was not completed till 1650 It is believed to have cost *more than a crore and a half of rupees* which in terms of the present value of money would be at least ten times as much *Two thirds of this was contri buted by the State office* and *one third by the State treasury of the province* The allocations of expendi tures on different parts of the structure have been carefully recorded in documents which are still existent

Perfect Example

"Though Agra enshrines several other magnificent specimens of Mogul architecture, the Taj is still considered the most perfect example of the Mogul style. In the fort, with its walls of red sandstone are the Pearl Mosque built by Shah Jahan and the Jahangiri Mahal built by Akbar. The Pearl Mosque is characteristically Mogul in the austere purity of its lines but the Jahangiri Mahal is an adaptation of the solidity and symmetry of the Hindu Style. Outside the fort and across the river is the tomb of Itmad-ud-Daulah, father of Jahangir's empress—a memorable architectural achievement which takes its place somewhere between the freshness and forthrightness of Akbar and the poetic exuberance of Shah Jahan. But the Taj far exceeds all these as well in the glory of its resplendent outline as in the beauty of its ornamentation.

"Shah Jahan, magnificent in his kingship and the dreamland which he preferred to the harsh and uncomely reality of the outside world, was equally magnificent in his sorrows. This exquisite memorial of an emperor's love was built by the sorrowing Shah Jahan for his departed spouse. He manifestly designed it to go down in history to a worshipful posterity, three hundred years after, it is still acclaimed as one of the supreme achievements of the architect."

Let us subject the above article to a close cross examination. The measurements mentioned could of course always be taken from the erstwhile Hindu palace which stands before us today as the Taj Mahal and stuffed into any post mortem of the construction.

The account of how the edifice was erected is

apparently the result of an hind sight post mortem carried out by some contemporary architects, as far as they can visualize it.

As for the 500 carpenters and 300 blacksmiths and such others employed we have no special objection because that many would be easily absorbed in erecting even a scaffolding around the massive Hindu palace which the Taj Mahal is, to convert it into a Muslim tomb

When it comes to identifying the architects the article throws no new light on the subject. It only repeats a few old names. And as we have noted earlier, all those names could be true inasmuch as there could be persons of those names who helped convert the Hindu palace into a Muslim tomb

As for diverting the distant Yamuna river to flow close enough to the Taj Mahal the less said the better, because we assert that Muslim regimes lacked all such skill. The few schools they had in those days of incessant plunder and massacre campaigns, were devoted to teaching a few illiterate fanatics to read the Koran We repeat that ancient or mediaeval Muslim literature has no architectural texts of its own which could at least make out a prima facie case for the claim to any architectural or civil engineering skill As against this we have a whole host of Indian Hindu architectural classics which boast of skills in all aspects of civil engineering surpassing those of our own times No wonder then that we see standing even to this day the majestic and massive hill fortresses of Ajmer Jodhpur Jaisalmer and Bikaner as well as the wonder shrines of Konarac Khajuraho Somnath Ajanta, Ellora, Madurai Martand and Modhera, to name only a few

Hindu forts and palaces always used to be built *alongside rivers for two reasons* Rivers provided a natural moat at least on one side and proved an unfailing, perennial source of water The palace of Mansingh (i e. the one inherited by him and not necessarily built by him) was, therefore already erected on the river bank. That palace is the present Taj Mahal and, therefore, diverting the river was out of the question

The figures of 1 000 bullock-carts, 1 000 mules and 2,000 camels are too round to be believed Moreover allowing for some imaginative exaggeration we concede that all *those animals and carts were necessary* when a huge palace complex had to be tampered with *for transformation into a tomb*

We however, object to the word 'minarets used by the author The Taj Mahal has *towers but no minarets* There is a vital difference between the two. Muslim minarets rise from the shoulders of buildings. Hindu towers start from the floor level—such as the so-called Kutub Minar (Delhi) the so-called Hiran Minar (Fatehpur Sikri), the marble towers of the Taj Mahal and the Rana Kumbha tower in Chittor fort

As for the assertion that the building is ' marvellous and stands as fresh as it was at the time of its completion" we are in full agreement with the learned author of the article, Mr Mohamed Din But since he implies that the building was erected in Shahjahan's time, we disagree and say that the palace known as the Taj Mahal existed centuries before the Muslim invasions of India.

In the concluding portion of the article the writer tells us that the *precious stones* used in the Taj Mahal

included 540 pieces of cornelian from Baghdad 670 turquoises from Upper Tibet and so on. Here we would only like to quote the sagacious Sir H M Elliot He says " 'The pretended accuracy and minuteness with which the value of gold silver and precious stones is given and the astounding exaggeration displayed in enumerating sums convey to the mind strong internal evidence of fabrication

Though the above remarks of Sir H M Elliot pertain to the many versions of the *Jahangirnama* yet they have a general application to all Muslim chronicles

We would therefore like to inform the writer of the article Mr Mohamed Din, and other readers, that the very meticulousness with which the figures and sources of various stones are given should arouse their suspicions A discerning and gifted historian like the late Sir H M Elliot could with his uncanny insight see through all such concoctions.

As for the other mediaeval buildings which the author of the article cites as examples of Muslim sculpture we would like to say that we have dealt with most of them individually in our book *Some Blunders of Indian Historical Research*[15] and proved that each one of those is an appropriated Hindu building put to Muslim use

The documents to which the author of the article refers which allegedly contain an accurate account of the amounts incurred on the Taj Mahal, can easily be proved to be forged by the simple fact that the expenditure incurred on the Taj Mahal varies in

[14] P 257 Elliot & Dowson *History* ibid., Vol VI

[15] *Some Blunders of Indian Historical Research* by P N Oak published by the Author July 1966

different versions, from four million rupees to over ninety million rupees In between lies the source from which Mr Mohamed Din quotes the expenditure to have been in the neighbourhood of 15 million (a crore and a half) rupees

The reference to the "timber posts bundled together" is another detail which betrays the unauthenticity of Mr Mohamed Din's source because Tavernier has already told us that no timber being available, all scaffolding had to be of bricks and that is why the cost of the scaffolding exceeded that of all the other work executed

THE BADSHAHNAMA VERSION ANALYSED

THE SAMPLE versions quoted earlier should suffice to convince the reader of the medley that is the Shahjahan legend of the Taj Mahal The more one goes into it the more confused one feels. As observed earlier, they form a big bottomless abyss which nobody can fathom. From everyday experience we know that a basic falsehood is never adequately covered or explained by subsequent falsehood Such falsehoods go on multiplying in bewildering variety This is exactly what has happened with regard to the Taj Mahal

After a general survey of the various sources from which concoctions of the Shahjahan legend of the Taj Mahal have sprouted we have arrived at the conclusion that Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori the court chronicler who admits the Taj Mahal to be a Hindu palace, is the only honest one

Let us therefore examine his chronicle a little more closely All this confusion about the origin of the Taj Mahal has arisen because historians completely ignored the wording of page 403 Vol I of the *Badshahnama* Perhaps his words got ignored because they had all along fancied the Taj Mahal to be an original tomb raised as a fabulous dreamland monument to love Now that we find him to be more truthful and honest let us have another closer look at the account of the Taj Mahal given in the *Badshahnama.*

The first point to be noted is that while traditional

rumours have tended to tell us that Shahjahan obtained an open plot of land from Jaisingh and built a palace on it, Mulla Abdul Hamid with disarming candour tells us that it was Jaisingh who was given an open piece of land (if that is what the term "sharifabad" signifies) in exchange for his fabulous (*manzil aali manzil imaarat-e-aalishan wa gumbaze*) ancestral domed palace. We are also told that this palace had a majestic, spacious (*sabz zamini*) garden around it.

Had Shahjahan wanted to build anything *de novo* would he choose a site which has a majestic palace standing on it? The very task of its demolition and clearing of its foundation to dig another would be stupendous The cost of removing the debris would be another very Herculean chore And would he spend all that time, money and energy when he had another "grand" plot of land which he is said to have given Jaisingh in exchange? Besides, what does the exchange show? Does it not show that Shahjahan wanted Jaisingh to fend for himself by building another residence while Shahjahan made him surrender his ancestral palace to serve as a ready made tomb for his wife, as well as by the same stroke further impoverish a wealthy Hindu family and denude it of its power? Was this also not consistent with the general Muslim usurping tradition in India and of Shahjahan's own high handed behaviour with all and sundry which we shall deal with in a subsequent chapter?

We would like the reader to note that Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori refers to the removal of Mumtaz's body from Burhanpur to Agra in a very casual manner while talking on page 402 about somebody having been suitably punished for incurring royal anger

Mumtaz's body is brought and straightaway buried under the dome of a lofty Hindu palace. What does it show? Lahori says the expenditure estimated (to transform it into a Muslim tomb i.e. digging and filling up a grave, constructing a cenotaph, sealing surplus staircases and basement rooms, engraving the Koran, erecting a huge scaffolding) was four million rupees. We pass this figure as reasonable except perhaps for some exaggeration and over estimate to allow for misappropriation by middle men. Then follows a long silence.

Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori gives some names and details of construction, on pages 322 to 330 in the second volume of his *Badshahnama*. He starts from the 'foundation' which is often misunderstood to mean the foundation of a huge palace. A grave has to start from the foundation because a dead body is to be buried in an earthy pit. His words that the foundation was brought to the ground level only mean that the grave was filled up with earth and masonry.

The author of the *Badshahnama* states[14] that half a million rupees were spent on the grave (including the cenotaph). This is not surprising. The estimate for the entire project was four million (40 lakhs) rupees. Deducting the Rs. 5 lakhs spent on the grave and the cenotaph from the overall figure we find that the Koranic engravings (along with the huge scaffolding raised to reach various heights of the walls and arches) cost Rs. 35 lakhs. We have full corroboration for this lop-sided expenditure in Tavernier's statement that the cost of the scaffolding was more than that of

[14] P. 714, *Badshahnama*, Vol. II states—
"Wa panj lakh rupaye bar rauzaya munavvaraa ki binaaye maanind aan bar ruje zameen deede aasman na deeda."

the entire work Here the cost of the scaffolding plus Koranic engravings is seven times that of the grave and cenotaph As we have several times earlier pointed out this disproportionate expenditure on the scaffolding itself is proof enough that the main work was comparatively insignificant

Some readers are likely to consider five lakhs of rupees for the grave and the cenotaph abnormal expenditure and therefore would conclude that something else was built with that amount Such a conclusion is unwarranted Firstly because Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori himself has given us a correct idea of the palace taken over Secondly, as we have already pointed out Muslim figures have to be cut to size by deducting exaggeration and over estimate margins. The remaining figure would be reasonable because demolishing the basement floor and the ground floor of a palace and superimposing a grave and a cenotaph on them covered with very costly precious stones and redoing the mosaic to match with the rich flooring of a Hindu palace, is bound to cost a huge sum

The following conclusions emerge from what Emperor Shahjahan's own court chronicler has recorded in the official history of the reign *Badshahnama*

1 That the Taj Mahal is a Hindu palace

2 It had around it a majestic and spacious garden

3 The huge building complex was obtained in exchange (if at all) for almost a song, i e at best transferring to the owner an open plot of land This too seems fishy because the location and size of the plot of land is not mentioned Most probably it was just a blatant expropriation effected by turning Jaisingh out of his wealthy ancestral palace

4 The Hindu palace had a dome

5. Mumtaz was buried, so they say, under that dome soon after her exhumed body was brought from Burhanpur to Agra.

6. The estimated expenditure (to transform the Hindu palace into a Muslim tomb) was Rs. 40 lakhs. (The actual expenditure is unknown.)

7. Of the above sum, Rs 5 lakhs was spent on the grave and cenotaph and the balance of Rs. 35 lakhs on the scaffolding and the Koranic engravings.

8. Designer or architects are out of the picture, since the Taj Mahal was never raised by Shahjahan.

9. The Hindu palace was known as Mansingh's palace during Emperor Shahjahan's time though it was in the occupation of his grandson Jaisingh.

The above account being fairly plausible fits with the truth that the Taj Mahal is an ancient Hindu palace commandeered for conversion into a Muslim tomb

Subsequent guesses about the architect, and doubts such as that the figure of the amount spent on the Taj Mahal (Rs. 40 lakhs) is too low, are altogether unjustified and unwarranted.

TAJ MAHAL CONSTRUCTION PERIOD

WE ARE going to show from this chapter onwards how the whole Shahjahan legend of the Taj Mahal is based on guesswork Starting from the unwarranted assumption that Shahjahan had the Taj Mahal erected as a tomb for his wife Mumtaz, every detail has been conjured up by different writers according to their own fancy In the result history has been burdened with a mass of canards which baffled all attempts at getting to the origin of the Taj Mahal

In this chapter we intend examining the question of its actual period of construction Had the Taj Mahal really been built by Shahjahan there should have been no room or necessity for any guess-work for we should have had official records of the commissioning and execution of such a stupendous monument from start to finish The absence of any authentic record is a glaring discrepancy Some documents and records which at times find mention in some writings are apparent forgeries because they are hardly believed in by anybody

If the Taj Mahal originated as a tomb the date of its commencement should be related to Mumtaz's death But to start with the very date of the death of this lady is unknown

This is what Mr Kanwar Lal says[17] "Mumtaz passed away in 1630 the date of her death being 7th June but some historians have erroneously placed the event in 1631 There is divergence also in respect of the date calculated some mention 7th others 17th

Had Mumtaz been the wife so doted upon by Shahjahan as has been made out in fictitious accounts of the origin of the Taj Mahal could there ever be such a lamentable divergence on the date of her death? But as we are going to show later her death hardly mattered to Shahjahan. She was one of his many consorts in a harem teeming with at least 4 999 other claimants of the Emperor s amorous attention

Mumtaz being just one among thousands of the Emperor s consorts her death could never call for any special monument.

The date of Mumtaz s death being unknown we are at a loss to know from where to count the six months that her body lay in the grave in Burhanpur Even that figure six months may after all be only approximate and not accurate.

Even on arrival in Agra we are told Mumtaz was buried the next year [18] under the dome of the Hindu palace This makes the date of her burial even more vague

In spite of this fundamental vagueness we would have accepted any unanimous view about the period during which the Taj Mahal was a building if there had been any consensus about it among historians. Unfortunately there is none Let us see how many versions there are

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[17] P 29 *The Taj* by Kanwar Lal, published by R. K. Publishing House, 57 Daryaganj, Delhi, Price Rs. 30

[18] P 403 *Badshahnama*, Vol I line 'Sale ayandeh

1 The *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* quoted by us earlier says[19] that the "construction commenced in 1631 A D and ended in January 1643 A D" That gives us a period of a little less than 12 years

2. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says[20] "the building was commenced in 1632 More than 20 000 workmen were employed daily to complete the mausoleum building itself by 1643 although the whole Taj complex took 22 years to complete' Unlike the first encyclopaedia, the latter gives us two separate periods one of 10 to 11 years and the other of 22 years. About this latter period of 22 years we would also like to ask why the mausoleum needed a building complex containing stables and guard and guest rooms? Was the dead Mumtaz still supposed to go riding, casting away the *burqa* and escorted by large cavalry contingents? Was she also expected to receive guests?

3 Tavernier's account runs completely counter to all Muslim versions which form the basis of the encyclopaedia accounts quoted above The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* account is actually an amalgam of the Tavernier and Muslim accounts inasmuch as it borrows the figures of 20 000 workmen and 22 years from Tavernier while deftly weaving in it the 11 or 12 year period fancied in Muslim accounts.

Tavernier says[21] he "witnessed the commencement and accomplishment of this great work on which they expended 22 years during which 20 000 men worked incessantly The cost of it has been enormous

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[19] Pp 35 36 *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* ibid Vol 15
[20] P 758 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1964 Ed Vol 21
[21] Pp 109 111, *Travels in India* ibid

The scaffolding alone cost more than the entire work . "

Considering that Tavernier arrived in Agra in 1641, even if the work began soon after his arrival there, it should have lasted from 1641 to 1663

When tallied with the events of Shahjahan's reign the period mentioned by Tavernier turns out to be unreliable Shahjahan was deposed and imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb in 1658 How then could the work of the Mumtaz mausoleum proceed until 1663, i e., five years after his losing control of state affairs? And if in fact, it did, what are we to make of some Muslim accounts which claim that the work had ended by about 1643? Then, again, the problem of the commencement of the construction still remains hanging in the air If, as Tavernier says, the building of the mausoleum commenced only in 1641 at the earliest, what was the hurry in bringing Mumtaz's body from Burhanpur to Agra in 1630 1631 and where did it lie until 1641?

4 Mr Mohamed Din's article[22] quoted earlier asserts, "The construction of the Taj Mahal was begun in 1632 and was not completed till 1650" Here again we come across the usual vagueness. Mr Mohamed Din seems to be sure of the date when the building commenced If we take 1632 as the year of commencement then what are we to make of Tavernier's implication that the work started only sometime in or after 1641? Even accepting Mr Mohamed Din's version of the date of commencement we wonder why he should remain vague and unconvinced about the date on which the mausoleum was complete. His version there-

[22] *The Illustrated Weekly of India* dated Dec 30, 1951

fore gives us a period of 18 years with a big question mark thereafter

Yet another version estimates the Taj Mahal to have been under construction for 17 years This is from Mr Arora s [3] book He says Shahjahan commenced building the Taj in 1631 the fourth year after his accession Several designs were prepared by masters of the art from distant lands but it was Afandi s which was approved From this a wooden model was constructed in 1630 the very year of Mumtaz s death The splendid mausoleum was completed in 1648

A critical study of this short passage should be enough to bare the numerous inconsistencies and anomalies of the Shahjahan legend of the Taj Mahal We would like readers to consider that firstly it is not even certain that Mumtaz died in 1630 because some give the year of her death as 1631 Even assuming that she died in 1630 she perhaps died towards the close of that year In such a case is it possible for the emperor to make a decision to build a dreamland monument, have a huge amount sanctioned for it, broadcast his scheme to distant lands have artists prepare plans, have them sent to Shahjahan from among whom we are told he selected one have a wooden model constructed the necessary workmen collected the bewildering variety of material ordered and construction begun all by 1630? Is this an Arabian Nights story or history? Had Shahjahan the peace and security within four years of his accession to indulge in such a sentimental project? Can things move so fast even in the best of modern administrations

[3] P 10 *City of the Taj* by R C. Arora printed at the Hibernian Press 15 Portuguese Church Street Calcutta

blessed with swift communications and any number of architectural and civil engineering schools where one can find a cluster of adept architects and engineers handy? Unfortunately such anomalies galore failed to arouse the suspicions of any historian.

6 A like version is also found in *The Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer*[14] If at all it appears to be a little more sure of itself than others. It states "The beautiful Taj Mahal (built 1630-1648) probably the most noted mausoleum in the world " etc etc All the arguments repeated above apply to this Gazetteer version too namely that since we are not even sure whether Mumtaz died in 1630, how could calling for mausoleum plans, selecting one ordering the building material etc., all be done just in one year?

These instances should suffice to give the reader an idea of the contradictions, inconsistencies incongruities and anomalies that riddle all versions of the period of construction of the Taj Mahal

According to our contention that the ultimate truth should be able to round off all apparent contradictions into a consistent account our explanation is that once Mumtaz was buried in the Hindu palace the work of covering her grave mound with masonry constructing a cenotaph and carving the Koran dragged on desultorily and spasmodically over 10 12 13 17 or 22 years Whenever a building undergoes alterations renovations or repairs (all very superficial in the case of the Taj Palace) drag on for years by fits and starts according to the whim of the new occupier To this extent there is a shadow of truth in the different versions quoted above.

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[14] P 19 Vol II

TAJ MAHAL COST

LIKE THE period of construction even the cost of the Taj Mahal has been subject to vague generalisations ranging between four and over ninety million rupees

1 The lowest figure of the cost concerning the Mumtaz mausoleum is that of Emperor Shahjahan s own *official chronicler Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori* He gives us only the initial estimate but not the actual expense incurred His figure is Rs 40 lakhs (four million rupees) [25]

2 The *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* figure exceeds that of Shahjahan s own chronicler by one million rupees It tells us that the expenditure incurred on the Taj Mahal was five million rupees (Rs 50 lakhs)

3 Mr Mohamed Din says [27] It is believed to have cost more than a crore and a half of rupees That gives us the figure of over Rs 15 million The reader may note the rising spiral of estimates Starting from a modest four million we have already been sent aloft to a *financial height of 15 million rupees in the rare* fied atmosphere of ethereal accounts Even Mr Mohamed Din is not very sure. He contents himself with saying 'more than' Rs 15 million.

[25] P 403 *Badshahnama*, Vol I last line

[26] Pp 35-36 *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* ibid Vol 15

[27] *The Illustrated Weekly of India* dated December 30 1951 ibid

4 According to Keene[28], "The exact amount spent on building the Taj is nowhere recorded and the data available for even an approximate estimate is so meagre and complex that the guesses hitherto made range from £500 000 to £5 000 000."

5 Sleeman has noted[29] that "The mausoleum and all the buildings cost Rs 3,17 48 026."

6 *The Diwan i Afridi*,[30] another historical work, estimates it (the expenditure) to be Rs. 9 crores and 17 lakhs (Rs. 90 17 million)

7 On the other hand Mr Bayard Taylor, an American who visited Agra in 1853, wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune* "A Sheikh who takes care of the Taj told me that the Taj with its other buildings cost seven crore rupees. This is, however, quite impossible. I believe the real cost is estimated at £1,750 000 which does not seem exaggerated."[31]

8 Mr Kanwar Lal[32] writes "Talking of the cost of the Taj there are all kinds of conjectures and accounts One estimate puts it at 50 lakhs of rupees This follows the mention of the figure in Abdul Hamid Lahori's *Badshahnama*. According to this historian 'the Taj was completed in 22 years under the supervision of Makramat Khan and Mir Abdul Karim and the total cost was fifty lakhs of rupees.' This as several authorities

[28] P 154 *Keene's Handbook for Visitors to Agra and its Neighbourhood* Rewritten and brought upto date by E. A Duncan Thacker's Handbook of Hindusthan

[29] P 54 *Rambles & Recollections of An Indian Official* Vol II by Lt Col W H Sleeman Republished by A. C. Majumdar 1888 Printed at Mufid i Am Press Lahore.

[30] P 154 *Keene's Handbook* ibid

[31] ibid.

[32] P 10 *The Taj* by Kanwar Lal ibid.

point out is ridiculously low even for the comparatively cheap labour and cost of material of those times

There are others who accept the figure of about four and a half crore rupees as the total cost In his authoritative book on the Taj Moinuddin Ahmed refers to a manuscript in which Rudradas Khazanchi—a treasurer—has given a detailed account of the expense incurred on the Taj This is given part by part and to the last pie The total figure amounts to Rs 4 18 48 826 seven annas and pies six only

The above passage claims that Mulla Abdul Hamid *Lahori has put the cost of the Taj Mahal at Rs. 50* lakhs but we have already quoted Mulla Abdul Hamid as mentioning Rs 40 lakhs (*chihal lakh roopiah*) to be the amount spent on the mausoleum Anyway this is just by way of a slight factual correction

The version of Rudradas Khazanchi calculating the cost of the Taj Mahal to the last pie only reminds us of the wise observation of the late Sir H. M Elliot that sycophant chroniclers added such little details from their fertile imagination to impart to their fictitious accounts a touch of reliability

Any single aspect of the Taj Mahal like that of the cost and period of construction discussed heretofore should be enough to convince intelligent readers how the Shahjahan legend is all a concoction from beginning to end Here we have seen how without any basis to start with numerous writers have indulged in irresponsible speculation in trying to figure out the real cost of the Taj Mahal incurred by Shahjahan But they were all destined to come to grief because they have all been working with the wrong premises Had Shahjahan really built the Taj Mahal the cost would

have been on record leaving no room or need for speculation

Besides the actual cost of the project there is another interesting sidelight to it Visitors to the Taj Mahal and lay readers of the Shahjahan legend of the Taj Mahal take it for granted in their innocence that Shahjahan must himself have financed his wife s mausoleum But our contention that Shahjahan was a hard hearted stingy lecherous monarch hardly to be bothered about or moved by the death of one of his 5 000 consorts, is amply borne out by *Guide to the Taj at Agra*[53] The *Guide* remarks 'The native account of the cost of the Taj gives Rs 98,55 426 as having been given by the Rajas and Nawabs and out of the Emperor's private treasury Rs 86 09 760 '

There is one little grain of truth in the above report That is that far from creating any dreamland monument for his dead wife Shahjahan merely used the occasion as a lever to force a Hindu chieftain out of his wealthy mansion and adding insult to injury made many Rajas and Nawabs bear the major financial burden in giving that erstwhile palace the semblance of a tomb

A closer examination of the two amounts mentioned above would suggest that they are fictitious Instead of mentioning round figures as having been contributed by Shahjahan and the other rulers respectively we are confronted with two odd amounts as though they were lifted from a modern commercial balance sheet where contributions by various parties are worked out to odd rupees

53 P 14 *Guide to the Taj at Agra* (Compilation) printed at the Victoria Press Lahore by Azeezoodeen

Another point to be noted is that Shahjahan's contribution may be a concocted figure He was too proud presumptuous haughty overbearing stingy, hard headed and hard hearted a monarch to spend even a farthing on a burial when he could extract the entire cost from other subservient rulers Even the amount that the other rulers are supposed to have contributed seems fictitious because according to Shahjahan s own chronicle the entire cost did not exceed Rs 4 million while the contribution of the other rulers mentioned above is itself almost Rs 10 million So the conclusion that emerges is that if at all the actual cost incurred in burying Mumtaz in a commandeered Hindu palace did amount to Rs 4 million that was extracted as a levy from Shahjahan s vassals and subjects Moghul rulers considered themselves to have a divine right to live off the earnings of their subjects

Far from building the Taj Mahal at his own cost Shahjahan was so stingy cruel and hard hearted that he got even the minor work of Koranic carvings and sealing of superfluous chambers of the erstwhile Hindu mansion done gratis by flogging the labourers

This is recorded on page 14 of *Guide to the Taj at Agra* (printed by Azeezoodeen in Lahore) as under The labour was all forced and very little payment made in cash to the 20 000 workmen who were said to have been employed for 17 years Even the allowance of corn was cruelly curtailed by rapacious officials placed over them

Apart from the cruelty part of it the reader may note a little discrepancy in the above version While Tavernier has referred to 20 000 workmen he has said that the work lasted for 22 years while the above account claims only 17 years This is yet another in-

stance of the confusion and bluff and bluster that surrounds the traditional accounts of the Taj since they are baseless

Keene notes on page 154 of his *Handbook* "The labour was forced and but little was paid to the workmen in cash while their daily allowance of cash was curtailed by rapacious officials. So great was their distress and so frightful the mortality among them that they must have cursed the memory of Mumtaz and cried out in sheer despair

Have mercy God on our distress
For we die too with the Princess

Since the mortality rate was high it is no wonder that every few days a new set of workmen had to be found to toil at the starvation level It is also no wonder then that the total number of labourers on the muster roll by the time the engraving work was over numbered 20 000 It is also no wonder that the petty work dragged on for a period ranging between 10 and 22 years according to various accounts. All this was natural when every day of the year a body of troops had to be sent out to find workmen of the required calibre and literary and calligraphic standard hound them and whisk them away to work without wage under the crack of the whip and gleam of menacing swords It is no wonder then that they wailed rebelled and either died or absconded Could a monarch who has no money or heart to pay poor labourers their wages ever hope to build anything much less a fabulous building like the Taj Mahal?

The despot at whose behest they toiled to make a Hindu mansion look like a Muslim tomb hardly cared for their lives He punished them by amputating their hands for the crime of demanding even a living wage

The hands were amputated obviously to teach them a lesson so that they may be permanently incapacitated from earning a livelihood by practising their carefully cultivated skills over generations and of which they were justly proud and which they were not ready to waste toiling gratis for a stingy and hard hearted alien monarch. Most of the skilled artisans being Hindus killing or maiming them also brought Shahjahan Islamic merit according to the concepts then prevailing among Muslim invaders.

Moulvi Moinuddin's book too contains (on page 17) a mention of the cruelty. He says "Some European writers have made disparaging remarks in connection with the building of the Taj. It is said that the employees suffered badly. They were reduced to starvation and subjected to harsh treatment."

Western scholars who are easily enamoured by the Shahjahan Mumtaz romance story—something akin to their Romeo and Juliet legend—would be the last persons to bring in anything so harsh as to spoil their amorous nostalgic dream of that Muslim romance by baseless accounts of Shahjahan's cruelty. The fact that they have felt compelled to record it despite their partiality and misplaced faith that carnal love and disconsolate (?) grief can produce architectural and financial wonders like the Taj Mahal, is proof enough that the European scholars have laid the charge of cruelty on first hand contemporary information.

Even Muslim sources seem to corroborate the amputation of hands but with a little difference. They give a gentle romantic twist to the fact of Shahjahan's cruel maiming of the labourers. They suggest that Shahjahan amputated the hands of skilful artisans with the laudable object that they may not lend their ser-

vices to any other person for erecting a rival Taj Mahal No one seems to have analysed this silly legend Firstly could a monarch with such a highly cultivated aesthetic sense as to conceive and build the Taj ever have the heart to treacherously bite away the hands which toiled for him? Secondly, would a monarch disconsolate in his bereavement be so stone-hearted as to maim those who built a tomb for his beloved wife? Thirdly is building a Taj Mahal such a cheap joke that anyone with a dying wife could summon the same set of labourers and commission them to build a rival Taj Mahal? Who would have the money similar legendary love for his wife and the power to even dream of a Taj for his own wife? Obviously the romantic twist given to the cruel amputation, is a brazen faced concoction which passes muster with gullible visitors to the Taj Mahal and with naive scholars It is an attempt to shroud Shahjahan s cruelty in ordering the alterations to a Hindu mansion to be carried out gratis, in an aura of romantic nonsense. The cruelty was resorted to subdue the workers who used to rebel in disgust everyday at being made to toil for no return.

Incidentally Shahjahan s attempt to get the work done on meagre rations alone also leads to the conclusion that the contemplated work amounted to only engravings and other alterations to an existing building No one can hope to build a magnificent mansion by providing a mere austere meal to the workmen.

Another connected legend is that Shahjahan intended to build a black marble Taj Mahal for himself on the other side of the river In corroboration of this some shrewd guides and some gullible historians point out to the poor visitor some ruins on the other side of the

river Those are the remains of Hindu pavilions on the other side of the river when the Taj Mahal was a royal Hindu mansion They were destroyed during successive Muslim invasions when enemy forces forded the river to capture the Taj building complex Now those same Hindu ruins too are claimed as Muslim constructions Since Shahjahan did not build the white marble Taj Mahal there was no question of his ever hoping conceiving or dreaming to build a black marble Taj Mahal In corroboration we quote Keene On page 163 he observes 'The cenotaph of Shahjahan is conjectured to have been unsymmetrically placed here (because he could not complete a mausoleum he had contemplated for himself) but of this there is no reliable record This shows that no matter which detail in the traditional Taj Mahal legend we try to pick up for closer examination it crumbles to pieces as a hopeless and atrocious concoction

WHO DESIGNED WHO BUILT THE TAJ?

SINCE THE Taj Mahal is an ancient Hindu palace, any search for its designer amongst the contemporaries of Shahjahan was bound to lead to disappointment, and so it has. Despite assiduous research and wild guesses all that has come down to us is a large medley of names all equally confusing and none qualifying for unanimous acclaim as the master-designer of that wonder monument—the Taj Mahal.

Let us here take stock of the different efforts made to identify the designer of the Taj Mahal

1 It is worth noting that Emperor Shahjahan's court chronicler Mulla Abdul Hamid makes no mention of any architect This is but natural because he at the very outset in describing Mumtaz's burial, admits that the mausoleum is a Hindu palace A ready building when used for a tomb requires no fresh architect. His silence is, therefore, quite in order Subsequent writers had no right to go out of their way to overrule the royal chronicler and advance their own guesses

Keene takes special note of this omission. He says[34] "Even though Abdul Hamid Lahori was specially instructed by Shahjahan to write the history of the Taj in the *Badshahnama* his silence regarding a designer is significant

[34] P 151 *Keene's Handbook* ibid

2 The *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* mentions only two supervisors[25]—Makamal Khan and Abdul Karim—and a few workmen This lends great force to our contention that two supervisors were enough to get the palace altered into a tomb

3 The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*[26] prefers to be sweetly vague by saying that "the plans had been prepared by a council of architects" from a number of countries It passes our comprehension how so many generations of scholars all over the world allowed themselves to be so thoroughly hypnotized by the Shah jahan legend as to be stopped short of thorough research into all aspects of the Taj Mahal

4 We have already seen how Tavernier was silenced by being told that the designer of the Taj Mahal had already been killed by Shahjahan so that the designer may not oblige any other potentate by designing another wonder monument We have already pointed out the absurdity of this. Moreover even though killed, the designer's name could very well live if at all there was any such person In fact, his death would have made his name immortal.

5 According to Professor B P Saksena,[27] "Though there is a great unanimity among writers in the estimate of the beauty of the Taj their opinions as to its origin and style differ widely Sleeman in his *Rambles and Recollections* makes the fantastic suggestion of its having been designed by a French engineer Austin de Bordeaux and by a ridiculous stretch of imagination identifies him with Ustad Isa But the suggestion is

[25] Pp. 35 36, *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* ibid., Vol. 15

[26] P 758, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ibid., Vol 21

[27] *History of the Shahjahan at Dihli* by Prof B P Saksena

not confirmed by historical evidence Vincent Smith, relying on the testimony of Manrique attributes the origin of the design to Geronimo Vironeo, a view which is rejected by Sir John Marshall and E B Havell "

6 Keene observes[38] "The names of the principal experts employed, headed by Mohammad Isa Afandi are given in a Persian manuscript entitled the *Tarikh-i-Taj Mahal* possessed by the Khadims or hereditary custodians of the Taj The authenticity of this document is somewhat questionable " The reader may note that the name Isa Afandi that is commonly paraded as that of the master designer of the Taj Mahal, originates in a forged document It was therefore but natural that nobody should believe in it

Since this Isa is a fictitious character his "native place is given variously as Agra Shiraz and Rum (European Turkey)," says[39] Mr Kanwar Lal

7 Mr Mohamed Khan's article[40] quoted in an earlier chapter adds a new name to the contestants for the honour of designing the Taj Mahal That name is—Ahmad Mahandis (and his three sons)

This wild chase for the architect of the Taj Mahal through a forest of rumours has proceeded merrily for over 300 years without anybody becoming the wiser for it Tired of that unending search scholars of history had resigned themselves to leaving it at that and quoting the several names as just so many alternatives to choose from Thus neither in the matter of the cost nor the period of construction nor on the name of the designer is there any unanimity On the other hand,

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[38] P 152, *Keene's Handbook* ibid

[39] Pp 42-43 *The Taj* by Kanwar Lal, ibid

[40] *The Illustrated Weekly of India* ibid.

a wide variety of alternatives is mentioned This could only happen when the very basis of the search and research is faulty

E B Havell observes, Some Indian records of the Taj mention the name of one Mannu Beg as the principal mosaic worker but in the list of principal workmen given by the *Imperial Library Manuscript* five mosaic workers from Kanauj all with Hindu names are entered The best Agra mosaic workers of the present day are also Hindus "[4]

The above passage is very revealing in many respects. It highlights the utter confusion that prevails about the designers and workmen connected with the Taj Mahal Such confusion arises only because of repeated attempts over generations to fill in the blanks in a fictitious story with a view to make a cogent account Such attempts have resulted in European scholars trying to fill the void by crediting the artistry in the Taj to Frenchmen and Italians while chauvinistic Muslim accounts have persisted in inserting fictitious Muslim names in the blanks In this welter the names of Hindu architects and artisans mentioned in the Imperial Library Manuscript could well be those of the original workmen who centuries before Shahjahan, built the Taj Mahal

Havell s observation that the best Agra mosaic workers *of the present day are also Hindus* clearly proves a long tradition among the Hindus of an art of which the Taj Mahal is the finest specimen It must be remembered that with the start of Muslim in

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4 P 1047 *The 19th Century and After* Vol III a monthly review edited by James Knowles article titled *The Taj and its Designers*

vasions education and training in all arts came to a dead halt. Al Biruni writing about Mohammad Ghazni's inroads into India observed[42] that he ground the Hindus to dust and scattered them all over. The process begun by Alaptagin, Sabuktagin and Mohammad Ghazni, of pulverizing Indian life and culture, continued in all its fury at least until Aurangzeb. Thereafter its tempo slackened because of the resurgence of nationalist forces. In that nightmarish period Indians were ferreted out of their homes and towns like reptiles and pests off and on. What scope was there then to cultivate any art or prosecute any studies? If then the best mosaic workers in Agra are still Hindus, as testified by Havell, they could only be descendants of those who built the Taj Mahal before the advent of the Muslims in India. This lends additional force to the conclusion that the Taj Mahal is an ancient Hindu building and not a comparatively modern tomb of the Moghul times.

That the Taj Mahal is not the only monument falsely credited to Shahjahan is apparent from another of Havell's observation. Havell says,[43] "In my opinion the Delhi *pietra dura* (the figure drawing of birds inlaid in the rear wall of the royal balcony in the Diwan-i-Am, Red Fort, Delhi) has been wrongly attributed to Shahjahan's reign. ... The naturalistic representation of birds and animals was a violation of Muslim law. The strict letter of (Koranic) law forbade the representation of the likeness of anything which is in heaven above or in the earth beneath."

Since the *pietra dura* is an integral part of the Red

[42] Preface to *Alberuni's India* by Dr Edward Sachau.
[43] P. 1049, *The 19th Century and After*, Vol III, ibid.

Fort, and not an after thought or of subsequent graft. Havell, in effect, concedes that the Red Fort in Delhi, commonly ascribed to Shahjahan existed in pre Muslim times when such figure-drawings were not only not taboo but considered essential decoration in royal mansions.

The authorship of the Jama Masjid in Delhi and the city of Old Delhi itself have been wrongly credited to Shahjahan There is not an iota of proof behind those assertions. Let anyone produce even a scrap of authentic paper from Shahjahan's court records showing that he commissioned the Taj Mahal and the other buildings ascribed to him Had there been *any such proof there would have been no need for* any history scholars to advance their own guesses

The pitiable state of Indian history in which baseless claims made in mediaeval Muslim chronicles to ancient monuments have been left unchallenged arises from the disinterestedness of India's erstwhile British rulers to subject them to a thorough check Since they, as rulers, manned the educational apparatus in India no Indian dared refuse to toe the official line lest he be denied an educational degree in history and consequently be disabled from earning a living Those not studying history were in no position to know that the Indian history being taught to generations was all perverted and distorted Thus historians or otherwise Indians lacked the capacity to challenge the history being taught to them

Subconsciously the British administration in India was, however, aware of the falsification of Indian history on a very large scale Therefore whenever claims affecting their interest in ancient buildings were advanced they, very officiously, ordered investigations

knowing full well that the result would be favourable to them One such instance is recorded in the *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of Agra*[41] It is a note on the Mubarak Manzil or Old Custom House by the Joint Secretary He records, Having been called upon to inquire and report whether the building occupied by the Custom House in Ballganj was originally a Mohammaden mosque or not I beg to state as follows The building in question does not appear to have been originally a Mohammaden mosque It would seem that the building was named Mubarak Manzil in consequence of its being the first halting place of emperor Aurangzeb after hearing the news of the victory which his troops gained in the Deccan There are signs extant of a small portion of the building set apart for prayer but this it will be found has always been done by the Mohammaden emperors.

The words it will be found (thus) has always been done by Mohammaden emperors are particularly noteworthy Thus the Mubarak Manzil referred to above is clearly an ancient Rajput mansion occupied by the British as successors to the Moghuls Similar inquiries conducted in the origin of all extant mediaeval monuments will clearly prove that they originated as Rajput mansions, castles and temples By conquest and usurpation they came to be regarded as original mosques tombs and forts built by the Muslims. Single walls capped with minars or grave like mounds appearing at desolate spots in fields or by roadsides throughout India are all remnants of or superimpositions on ancient Hindu monuments.

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[41] *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of Agra* January to June 1878

Another instance of the lack of incentive which prevented British scholars from reconstructing the history of India's mediaeval monuments and made them acquiesce in Muslim claims, is provided in the *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of Agra,*[43] July to December 1875 That volume describing Salimgarh, says, "In front of the artillery barracks and overlooking the great courtyard of the Diwan-i-Am, is a singular and apparently purposeless square building. It is ornamented in a sort of Hinduised style, like the Jehangiri Mahal. Tradition has nothing to say beyond giving this a name ."

Discerning scholars can get several revealing clues in the above passage Firstly it confesses that both what are known as Salimgarh and Jehangiri Mahal are ancient Hindu buildings because iconoclastic Muslim rulers would never tolerate Hindu ornamentation in the buildings they ordered, if any What is more revealing is that many parts of those buildings appear superfluous and "purposeless" because those buildings were usurped Conquerors would naturally be at a loss to explain away the significance of every single part of captured buildings according to their way of life since the buildings were built by those professing a different way of life In spite of such glaring inconsistencies, anomalies and lacunae in the past history of every single mediaeval monument it was sheer intellectual inertia arising from lack of incentive which prevented British scholars from inquiring into and writing the true history of India's mediaeval monuments Indian scholars being subservient to the British dared not deviate from the latter's findings for fear

[43] P 14 of the volume

of being denied official recognition and patronage

A document called the *Tarikh i Taj Mahal* supposed to record the origin and history of the Taj Mahal had been in the hereditary possession of the caretakers of that monument. According to newspaper reports that document has now been stolen and taken to a foreign country *Keene's Handbook*[44] states, "The authenticity of this document is somewhat questionable." Obviously he has used the word "somewhat" out of a sense of modesty and caution What he actually meant to convey was that the document was an outright forgery Even ordinary judgment should tell us that the need for a forged document arises only when a false claim is to be staked Had the Taj Mahal been an original tomb the need for a forged document would never have arisen The existence of such a document is substantial proof that when the Taj Mahal was taken from its rightful owners for being converted into a tomb or even earlier its original papers were destroyed and replaced by false documents That is why no aspect of the Taj as described in the traditional version is free from doubt and suspicion

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44 P 152, *Keene's Handbook* ibid.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TAJ IS BUILT TO HINDU SPECIFICATIONS

HINDU PALACES of old used to be built in the midst of busy townships even as the ruler used to ride on elephant back in the very centre of his military forces arrayed on a battlefield Even in the palace itself the ruler's own room used to be in the centre of the edifice This aspect of Hindu custom in battle and architecture has to be taken into account when studying mediaeval monuments in India which, though they masquerade as tombs and mosques, are all ancient Hindu temples and palaces.

The Hindu king and his nobility being the chief buyers of the products of the choicest merchandise palace complexes often provided accommodation for a bazar This applies to the Taj Mahal and is testified to by Tavernier

The very term Taj Mahal means a 'Crown Residence" or a "crown among residences" It does not in the least signify a tomb A tomb and a palace are as different as heaven and earth Had the words "Taj Mahal' the least sepulchral tinge nobody would have dared name any hotel as 'Taj Mahal Hotel' for which tourist would like to live in a Grave Yard Hotel ? But tourists are attracted by the name Taj Mahal precisely because the name connotes the glory and majesty of a palace or temple and not the silence and gloom of a tomb

That the (Hindu) Taj Mahal (palace complex) had rows of shops forming a bazar within its precincts is recorded by Tavernier He says that "The *Tasuma can* is a large bazar" What he means by *Tasumacan* is *Taj i Macan* i e a royal residence He adds that it consists of "six large courts all surrounded with porticos under which there are chambers for the use of merchants and an enormous quantity of cotton is sold there "

These same porticos may still be seen in what we wrongly consider the redstone wall precincts of the Taj Mahal constructed by Shahjahan. Some of those same shops are at present occupied by a canteen and picture postcard sellers and dealers in curios and by modellers of the Taj Mahal

Here we must also recall that the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* lists among the ancillary buildings of the Taj Mahal complex stables, guesthouses and guard rooms All these necessarily form part of a palace but not that of a mausoleum

Misleading notions that mediaeval buildings are Muslim constructions simply because they appear to be tombs and mosques and because long association and tradition ascribed to them Muslim origins, got rooted in Indian history Yet Western scholars came very near the truth in asserting that the seeming Mus lim buildings were out of columns panels beams, brackets and everything else belonging to earlier Hindu buildings We quote a typical observation of a British scholar He writes Earlier Muhammadan invaders before the Adil Shahi—under Karimuddin about 1316 —had built a mosque in the fort of Bijapur construct ed out of Hindu remains How far the pillars used there by them are torn from other buildings we are not

informed. It would appear, however, that it consists partly of the portico of a Hindu temple but this is not incompatible with the idea that other portions were removed from the original positions and readopted to their present purposes.

The above extract shows that the truth was just round the corner and yet Western scholars failed to grasp it. Their presumption that they were inside a Muslim tomb or mosque so smothered their reasoning faculty that they could not divine their standing inside a Hindu temple or mansion later put to Muslim use. Almost every mediaeval building the Western scholars presume must have been built from debris of an earlier Hindu building. This is only half the truth. It did not occur to them that ancient Hindus did not build their temples and mansions and forts from prefabricated standardised pillars, beams, brackets and panels to be freely dismantled and used elsewhere at will.

Moreover, it should be realized that no new building can be erected from the debris of an old one. Even the cost of transporting such material after demolishing an earlier building will be tremendous. The parts would chip off and break in the process and would be useless for erecting a building of dimensions different from those of the building demolished. And who would be quixotic enough to demolish a Hindu building, transport its material to another place and re-erect a similar building from the same material?

If a gigantic Hindu building is dismantled and all its stone slabs are transported to another place they would all get so badly mixed up that it would be a big time-consuming headache to sort them out and rearrange them to know which stone belongs to which storey and which portion. The magnitude of the pro

blem may be realized from the fact that people who shutter their shops with planks have to number those planks and to make special markings to indicate their upper ends and inner or outer sides Unless those planks are thus placed in their proper order the shop cannot be securely shuttered When ordinary shut tering with readymade and well fitting planks by a man well versed with the job through everyday practice becomes difficult without proper markings could huge buildings be raised in all their perfection and artistry from a medley of confused debris of a demolished building, carried elsewhere?

Moreover, even that would be impossible because presuming that the other material remains intact would it not need a new foundation! So the simple truth is that the Muslims did not construct any building with Hindu material They just stepped into a Hindu temple or mansion and put it to their own use by burying somebody in it throwing away the idol chiselling away Hindu ornamentation or plastering it over and by en graving the Koran over it This is the reason why mediaeval Muslim tombs and mosques look so similar to Hindu temples and mansions The same is true of the Taj Mahal

It is a pity that presuming all these buildings to be genuinely Muslim but built in the Hindu style Western scholars have conjured up a whole theory of Indo-Saracenic architecture and injected it under official pressure into text books of history architecture and civil engineering.

It is this untenable theory which has rapturously described the Taj Mahal as the very flower and con summation of the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture How very miserably misleading all these assumptions

have been may now be gauged from our proving the Taj Mahal to be not a 17th Century Muslim tomb but an ancient Shiva temple of the 12th Century A D later converted by Muslim conquerors into a palace and reconquered by the Hindus There is also another absurdity in believing that mediaeval Muslims could build mosques and tombs with stone obtained by demolishing Hindu temples and palaces The absurdity is that mediaeval buildings are all made of brick and lime inside Stone only forms the outer pitching Just as one cannot steal an egg shell or a coconut shell and hope to make an egg or a coconut out of it similarly it is absurd to assert that alien Muslim rulers could strip Hindu buildings of their stone dressings, carry all that stone in a confused mass elsewhere and then rearrange all that stone to create massive, magnificent and lasting buildings out of material carved and designed by Hindus centuries earlier to suit their own shapes, patterns and uses.

We have no intention however of blaming the Western scholars They were intellectual giants and painstaking academicians but being foreigners had not been fully exposed to the malpractices of Muslim rule in India As such they lacked a certain amount of personal experience of conditions in Indian history Even then most of them as observed by us before came very near the truth One such was E B Havell a great architect and one endowed with a deep insight.

Havell has debunked the claim that the Taj Mahal is the product of any non Hindu architectural style. In discussing the architecture of the Taj Mahal and the claim of some historians that an Italian named Veroneo may have been its designer Mr Kanwar Lal quotes Mr Havell thus —' So if Veroneo was so deep-

ly versed in Indian craft tradition that he could design a lotus dome after the rules laid down in the *Shilpa Shastras* the dome itself built by Asiatic craftsmen would not have been his The dome of the Taj at Agra and the dome of Ibrahim s tomb (in Bijapur) both are constructed on the same principles. They are nearly of the same dimensions, and a fact unnoticed by Fergusson and his followers, the contours of both correspond exactly except that the lotus crown of the Taj at Agra tapers more finely and the lotus petals at the springing of the dome are inlaid instead of being sculptured The Taj Mahal is in fact, exactly such a building as one would expect to be created in India by a group of master builders inheriting the traditions of Buddhist and Hindu building The plan which consists of a central domed chamber surrounded by four small domed chambers follows the plan of an Indian *pancharatna* or five jewelled temple Its prototype as I have shown elsewhere is found in the Buddhist temple of Chandi Sewa in Java and in the sculptured stupa shrines of Ajanta Neither Shahjahan nor his court builders much less an obscure Italian adventurer can claim the whole merit of its achievement [1]

How very clear is Mr Havell in his assertion that the Taj Mahal is built in the ancient Indian Hindu style and none of Shahjahan s contemporaries could design or conceive of it We regret that Mr Havell was unaware of the admission in Shahjahan s own official chronicle the *Badshahnama* that the Taj Mahal is an ancient Hindu mansion Had that confession

[1] Pp 44-45 *Tl Taj* by Kanwar Lal ibid.

come to light in his time he would have rejoiced to find his architectural conclusion fully corroborated by history and he would then have been acknowledged as an authority on Indian architecture far superior to Percy Brown or Fergusson

Incidentally we would like the reader to note here the great Mr Havell s observation that the dome it self and the inverted lotus cap over it are very ancient forms of pure Indian Hindu architecture dealt with in the Indian *Shilpa Shastra* which originates in un traceable antiquity

The Indian *Shilpa Shastra* in its bewildering rami fications needs to be thoroughly studied and research ed In order to present a panorama of the ancient Indian *Shilpa Shastra* we refer the reader to the chart at the end of this book showing the branches of the ancient Indian science of engineering as compiled by a great[49] indologist and engineer Raosaheb K V Vaze L.C.E That will give the reader an idea of the thousands of years of architectural penance practice and scholarship that lie behind India s cave temples mansions, ghats, palaces canals bridges and forts and one of the prettiest buildings that the ancient Hindu *Shilpa Shastra* has produced—namely the Taj Mahal After carefully tracing the geneological tree of the Indian *Shilpa Shastra* the reader will realize how

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[49] We must here record our gratitude to Mr G G Joshi for lending us the said chart and an account of the late Mr Vaze s life and work. Readers may refer to Mr Joshi s article on Mr Vaze in the Marathi Weekly *Shilpa-Sansar* Poona, dated March 26 1965 Another article on Mr Vaze by Mr V M Tambat, appeared in the Diwali issue of the Marathi monthly *Vishwakarma Vikas*

puerile and hasty has been the notion that it was Shah Jahan who commissioned the Taj Mahal

The late Mr K V Vaze an authority on ancient Indian engineering and architecture, was born in an indigent family on December 16 1869

In the year 1891 he qualified as a Civil Engineer from the Poona Engineering College Poona, India

Indicating how he turned towards a study of ancient Indian architecture and engineering Mr Vaze once wrote in the *Vedic Magazine* (published from Lahore now in Pakistan) 'I was much surprised to find that during the whole course of my training in engineering there was no mention of any Indian author or texts or formula of engineering subjects (though) I had known eminent men admire (ancient Indian) buildings, sculptures, forts, canals, guns and pillars I therefore made up my mind to see how the matter stands

I know the names of about 400 texts of which I read fifty

Mr Vaze retired from the Bombay Government s engineering service in 1916 Mr Vaze s entire career was devoted to a deep study of ancient Indian engineering. In addition to his writings on Hindu religion and culture Mr Vaze has written many books and numerous articles and papers on the research to which he passionately devoted himself as a pioneer His published works are —

(1) *Shilpa Shikshanachay Mahatwa*—This book written in Marathi, is a 50-page treatise explaining the 32 branches of learning classified by ancient Indians In this book the author mentions that he has many research manuscripts ready which remain unpublished for want of adequate funds.

(2) *Pracheen Hindi Shilpashastrasar*—This book (in Marathi) comprising 216 pages unfolds in 14 chapters the panorama of ancient Indian engineering and technology.

(3) *Kashyashilpam*—Mr Vaze has edited and annotated this ancient Sanskrit text consisting of 88 chapters and 274 pages, dealing with a branch of ancient Indian engineering.

(4) *Pracheen Hindi Shilpashastra*, Part I (in Marathi) —is the preface to the 11-volume encyclopaedic treatise which Mr Vaze contemplated writing, on the vista of ancient Indian engineering and technology, pages 200 The book is sold by the Bharat Itihas Samshodhan Mandal, Sadashiv Peth, Poona-2 (India).

Shortly after the publication of the above book, Mr Vaze died after a short illness on March 31, 1929. In him the world and specially India lost a great scholar who held promise of publishing an authoritative and exhaustive encyclopaedia on ancient Indian engineering and technology

Obviously it is a matter of great shame that such a great scholar died crying for funds without being able to put in print all that his inspired intellect was straining at the leash to express

(5) *Aryashilpa—Hindi Yantrashastra*, pages 46, price six annas—explains in Marathi the science of ancient Indian machines, published by Balshastri Ravjee Ksheersagar, Kalikaprasad Press, Poona 2 (India)

(6) *Aryashilpa-Vastushastra*—deals with the construction of buildings, and timber This book in Marathi is published by Balshastri Ravjee Ksheersagar, Kalikaprasad Press, Poona 2 (India)

(7) *Aryashilpa Chitravidya*, i e *Chitralekha Shastra* —also in Marathi, published by Balshastri Ravjee

Ksheersagar Kalikaprasad Press Poona 2 (India) deals with figure drawing

(8) *Aryashilpa Dhanurvidya*—deals with Indian archery published (in Marathi) by Balshastri Ravjee Ksheersagar Kalikaprasad Press Poona 2 (India)

(9) *Pracheen Yuddhavidya*—Ancient Indian Science of Warfare and Tactics (in Marathi) published in the Sayaji Sahityamala (10th publication) available with Tukaram Book Depot Madhavbagh Bombay-4 (India) pages 144 price 87 paisa

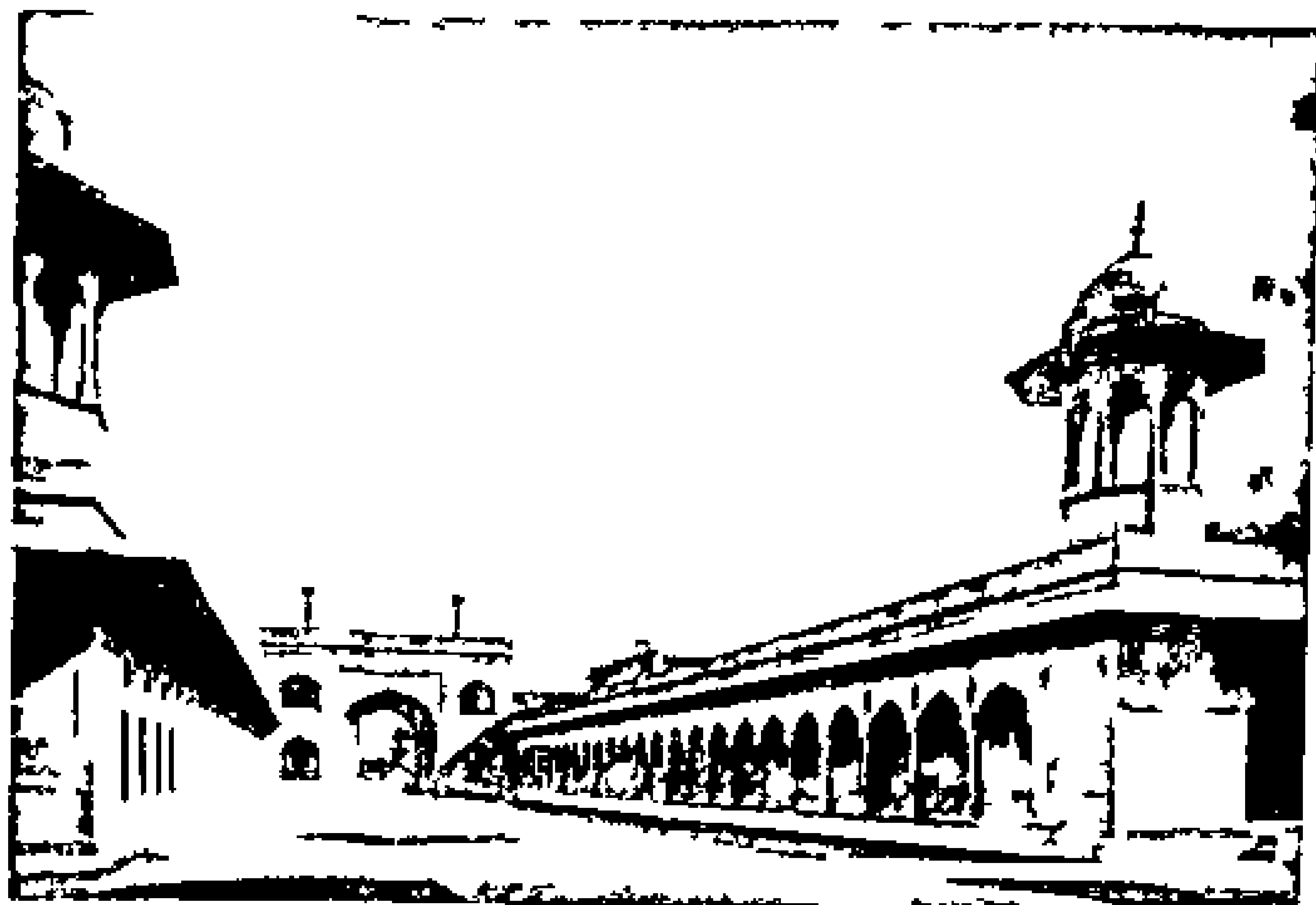
(10) *Pracheen Hindi Shilpashastra* Part IV—dealing with town planning and temple and palace building *(Nagar Rachana Shastra)* in Marathi pages 184 price Rs 2|, published in the Ichalkaranjee Granthimala (series) Budhwarpeth Poona 2 (India)

Besides the above Mr Vaze wrote a number of articles in various periodicals A fairly exhaustive and detailed study of Mr Vaze s researches has been made by Mr G G Joshi B-5|1 Ravi Nagar Nagpur (India)

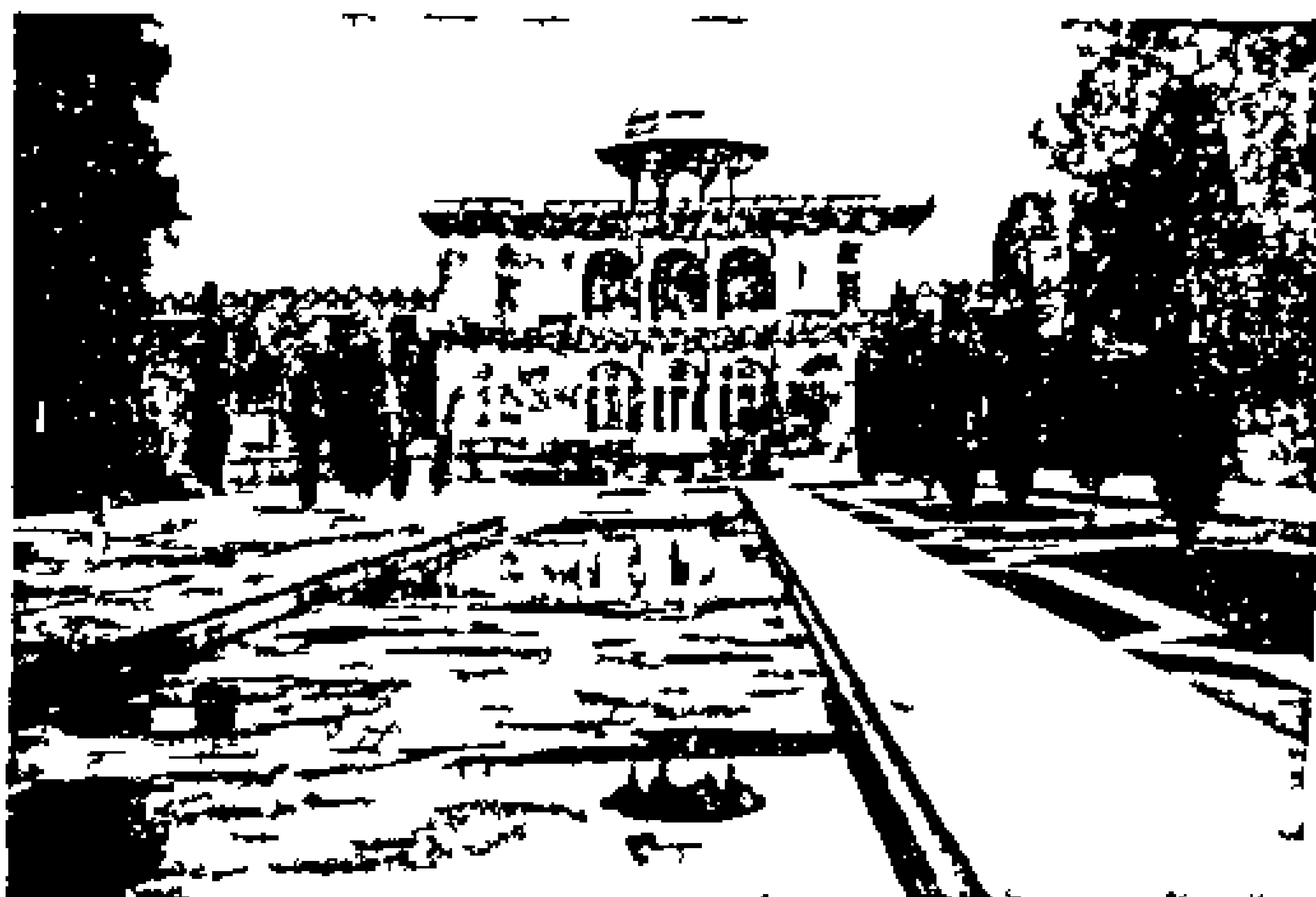
The following works contain innumerable useful titles of Sanskrit reference books on *Bharateeya Shilpa Shastra* i e the science of engineering technology —

(i) *Contribution to a Bibliography of Indian Art and Aesthetics* by Haridas Mitra of Shantiniketan Birbhum
(ii) *Dictionary of Hindu Architecture* by P K Acharya
(iii) *Study in Vastu Vidya* by Tarapad Bhattacharya
(iv) *Hindi Shilpa Shastra Prastavana Khand* by Rao Saheb K V Vaze L.C.E Shilpakalanidhi

Those who claim that the mediaeval Muslim invaders built building after building and founded town after town in their own Saracenic style in India should



Approach to the Taj Mahal

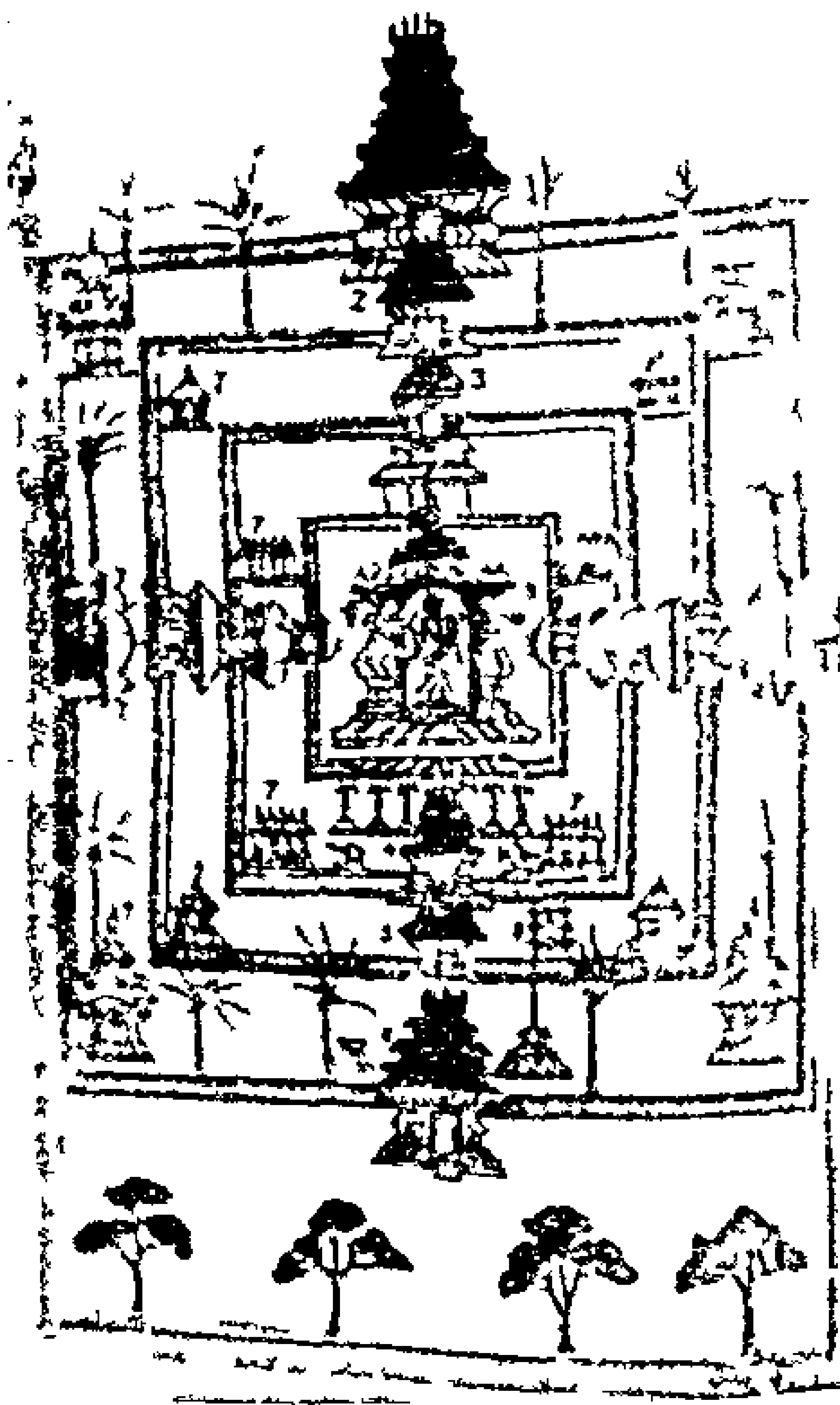


Nakkar Khana

هردو را از هم جدا می ساخت - و بهمین زورهای بیجا بیمار شده پس از چندی در زندگی پدر بپری شد - مادقا چون فتح خان پسر عنامر نویسنده بمعین الدوله آصفجاه عرضه داشت مشتوي بر دولتخواهي و هوا خواهي مرسلاده معروض داشته بود - که این خدمت گذار اخلاص شعار بی نظام را که از کوتاه بینی و شقاوت گرفتن بدسگالي و مخالفت اولیای دولت ابد میعاد می نمود - مقید ساخته امیدوار مراحم پادشاهي است - و در جواب آن فرمان قضا جریان عز صدور یافته بود - که اگر گفتار او فروغ راستي دارد جهان را از آلایش وجود بی سود او پاک گرداند - چون فتح خان بعد از ورود حکم جهان مطاع مردان بی نظام بدفرجام را خفه نموده شهرت داد که باجل طبیعي در گذشت - و حسین نام پسر ده ساله اورا جانشین آن بد آئین گردانید - و عرضه داشتي مبني از حقیقت این واقعه بدست محمد ابراهیم که از نوکران معتمد او بود بدرگاه سلاطین پناه فرستاد - مثال لازم الامتثال صادر شد که انثالي را که بدرون حصار دولت آباد برده - از قلت آذوقه ضایع خواهند شد - آن را با نفایس جواهر و مرصع آلات بی نظام همراه پسر کلان خود برسم پیشکش ارسال نماید - تا ملتمسات او عز قبول یابد و با منشور نوازش کپوه مرصع و دو اسپ یکی عراقي با زین طلا دیگری ترکي راهوار با زین مطلا مصحوب شکرالله عرب و فتح خان بدولتآباد فرستادند - اوداجیرام بانعام چل هزار روپیه سرافرازگردید •

روز جمعه هفدهم جمادي الاولی نعش مقدس مسافر اقلیم تقدس حضرت مهد علیا ممتاز الزماني را که بطریق امانت مدفون

بود مخصوص بود. شاهزادهٔ نامدار محمد شاه شجاع بهادر و وزیر خان
و صتی النساء خانم که بمزاج شناسی و کاردانی بدرجهٔ اولی پیش
دستی و تابوت آن ملکهٔ جهان ملکهٔ جهانیان رسیده بود روانهٔ
دار الخلافهٔ اکبرآباد نمودند و حکم شد که هر روز در راه آش بسیار
و درهم و دنانیر بی شمار بفقرا و مستحقان دهند و زمینی در
نهایت رفعت و نزاهت که جنوب رویهٔ آن مصر جامع است و
پیش ازین منزل راجه مانسنگه بود. و درینوقت براجه جی سنگه
نبیرهٔ او تعلق داشت برای مدفن آن بهشت موطن برگزیدند.
اگرچه راجه جی سنگه حصول این دولت را فوز عظیم دانست اما
از روی احتیاط که در جمیع شئون خصوصا امور دینیه ناگزیر است.
در عوض آن عالی منزلی از خالصهٔ شریفه باو مرحمت فرمودند.
بعد از رسیدن نعش بآن شهر کرامت بهر پانزدهم جمادی الاولی سنه
سال آینده پیکر نورانی آن آسمانی گوهر بخاک پاک سپرده آمد
و متصدیان دار الخلافه بحکم معلی عجالة الوقت تربت فلک مرتبت
آن جهان عفت را از نظر پوشیدند و عمارتی عالیشان و گنبدی
رفیع بنیان که تا رستخیز در بلندی یادگار همت گردون رفعت
حضرت صاحبقران ثانی باشد و در استوای نمودار استقامت
عزائم بانی طرح افگندند و مهندسان دوربین و معماران صنعت
آیین چهل لک روپیه اخراجات این عمارت برآورد نمودند.



Ground plan of a typical ancient Hindu temple

produce a list of ancient or mediaeval Muslim architectural text books to substantiate their claim. If they cannot, then they had better stop believing in it or swearing by it

SHAHJAHAN WAS INNOCENT OF SOFT FEELINGS

ASCRIBING THE creation of the Taj Mahal to Shahjahan amounts to crediting him with Romeo-like constancy in love to Mumtaz and the soft heart of an artist. Far from that Shahjahan was a hard hearted haughty conceited bigoted stingy fanatical cruel and lecherous tyrant. And Mumtaz was a perfect match for him.

Maulvi Moinuddin Ahmad says,[49] 'European historians have sometimes charged Shahjahan with bigotry traced to the fountainhead of narrow mindedness in Mumtaz

Havell observes,[50] The Jesuits were bitterly persecuted by Shahjahan. Only a short time before her death Mumtaz Mahal who was a relentless enemy of the Christians had instigated Shahjahan to attack the Portuguese settlement in Hooghly

In the *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of Agra* it is stated[51] Many times did Shahjahan invite the monks and secular priests to become Mahomedans (but when they repudiated his overtures) Shahjahan was greatly irritated and there and then ordered the priests to be executed the next day by the torture

[49] P 8 *The Taj and its Environments* 2nd Ed. printed by R. G Bansal & Co 339 Kassairat Bazar Agra.

[50] P 1041 *The 19th Century and After* ibid., Vol III

[51] Pp vii ix, *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of Agra*, January to June 1878 ibid

then used against the worst outlaws that of being trampled underfoot by elephants

Keene says, 'Shahjahan surpassed all the Moghul emperors in autocratic pride and was the first of them to safeguard the throne by murdering all possible rivals According to Roe who knew Shahjahan personally his nature was unbending and mingled with extreme pride and contempt of all.

Even Mulla Abdul Hamid s official chronicle of Shahjahan s reign records in connection with the conquest of Daulatabad that Kasim Khan and Kambu brought 400 Christian prisoners male and female, young and old with the idols of their worship to the presence of the faith-defending emperor He ordered that the principles of the Muhammedan religion be explained to them and they be called upon to adopt it. A few embraced the faith. But the majority in perversity and wilfulness rejected the proposal These were distributed among the amirs, who were directed to keep these desp cable wretches in rigorous confinement So it came to pass that many of them passed from prison to hell Such of their idols as were the likeness of the Prophet s were thrown into the Jumna the rest were broken to pieces

History is replete with descriptions of Shahjahan s cruelty giving a lie to the average text book version of his being a man of great artistic taste and a devo ed husband Cruelty was Shahjahan s congenital trait It manifested itself from a very young age and won for him the unenviable epithet of being a scoundrel of the first water from no less a person than his own august father Emperor Jehangir

Shahjahan s villainy manifested itself from a very young age towards even his kith and kin not to talk

of strangers This may be illustrated by a typical passage on page 25 of Keene's *Handbook* He observes that Shahjahan "in open rebellion (against his own father, Emperor Jehangir) seized Fatehpur Sikri, and sacked the city of Agra where according to Della Valle, a noble Italian then on a visit to India, his army committed fearful barbarities The citizens were compelled under torture to give up their hoarded treasures, and many ladies of quality were outraged and mutilated"

It is a great travesty and irony of Indian history that a ravager, torturer, molester, extortionist, plunderer and destroyer should be paraded and praised sky high as a devoted husband of Mumtaz, a connoisseur of art a patron of letters a conceiver of beautiful buildings and the usher of a golden age This is an insult to the intelligence of both teachers and students of history

In a footnote on page 38 Keene adds "Shahjahan put to death his youngest brother Shahriar, and the two sons of his paternal uncle Daniel He is also credited by some historians with the murder of his eldest brother Khusru"

Shahjahan's phenomenal lechery and utter unconcern for his wife Mumtaz's health or well being was responsible for running her to earth by inflicting on her 14 deliveries in a married life of less than 18 years resulting in her premature death A long list of the 14 children Mumtaz had to deliver to Shahjahan in a record period of less than 18 years until she delivered the last and death said "no more hereafter" appears in a footnote on page 37 of Keene's *Handbook* The formidable list which reads like family planning in the reverse, is as under —1 Huriel Nisa (daughter).

born 1612 died 1615 2 Jahanara 1613—a daughter with whom later Shahjahan is reported to have developed illicit sexual relations 3 Muhammad Dara Sheko born 1614 4 Muhammad Shah Shuja born 1615 5 Roshanara a daughter born 1616 6 Muhammad Aurangzeb born 1617 This Aurangzeb is a cursed name in Indian history He followed his father Shahjahan s example of murdering or maiming all his rivals 7 Umaid Bakht born 1619 died 1621 *8 Suria Bano born 1620 died 1627 9 An unnamed son was born in 1621 and died soon after 10 Murad* Baksh born in 1623 11 Latfulla born in 1626 died *in the following year 12 Daulat Afzal born in 1627* died the following year 13 An unnamed daughter died soon after birth in 1628 14 Gauhara a daughter *born in 1629 It was during this child birth that* Mumtaz died

Here is what Emperor Jahangir has to say about his own son *Shahjahan* [5] *I directed that hencefor*ward he (prince Shahjahan) should be called a Wretch and whenever the word Wretch occurs in this *Ikbal nama* it is he who is intended The pen cannot describe all that I have done for him nor can I recount my own grief or mention the anguish and weakness which oppress me especially during these journeys and marchings which I am obliged to make in pursuit of him (a rebellious prince Shahjahan) who is no *longer my son*

Far from being a builder of anything Shahjahan was a destroyer Here is what his own court chronicler Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori says [53] It had been

[5] P 281 Elliot & Dowson *History* ibid Vol VI
[53] P 36, Elliot & Dowson *History* ibid Vol VII

brought to the notice of His Majesty that during the late reign many idol temples had been begun, but remained unfinished, at Benares the great stronghold of infidelity The infidels were now desirous of completing them His Majesty, the defender of the faith, gave orders that at Benares, and throughout all his dominions in every place, all temples that had been begun should be cast down It was now reported from the province of Allahabad that 76 temples had been destroyed in the district of Benares."

We draw two conclusions from the above passages. Firstly we lay down as a general principle before students of history our conclusion that a destroyer is never a builder Secondly the words "cast down" or 'destroyed' are to be understood in a very qualified sense namely that Hindus were ousted from their temples their images were thrown out and the same buildings were used for mosques It is this practice of India's alien Muslim rulers which explains why every mediaeval tomb and mosque looks like a temple or a Hindu mansion

Mr Kanwar Lal's book notes[54] 'Shahjahan was professedly a strict Sunni and probably at the instigation of Mumtaz Mahal he had renewed the destruction of Hindu temples He had broken down the steeple of the Christian Church at Agra [55] European travellers, Bernier and Manucci describe numerous scandals connected with the private life of Shahjahan and depict him as a despicable creature, whose only concern in life was how to indulge in bestial sensuality and monstrous lewdness Accord

[54] Pp 42-43 *The Taj* by Kanwar Lal, ibid.
[55] P 26 ibid.

ing to them the frequent fancy bazars in the palace the maintenance of a large number of dancing girls by the state the presence of hundreds of male servants in the seraglio were so many objects for the satisfaction of Shahjahan's lust. Manucci says, It would seem as if the only thing Shahjahan cared for was the search for women to serve his pleasure' He also writes about the intimacy of Shahjahan with the wives of Jafer Khan and Khalilullah Khan, and says that it became so notorious that when they went to court the mendicants in loud voice cried out to Jafer Khan s wife, O Breakfast of Shahjahan, remember us! and when the wife of Khalilullah Khan went by they shouted 'O Luncheon of Shahjahan succour us!" Bernier remarks that Shahjahan had a weakness for the flesh. Manrique speaks of Shahjahan's violating the chastity of the wife of Shayista Khan with the assistance of his daughter Peter Mundy talks of Shahjahan's incestuous connection with his daughter Chamani Begum Tavernier writes in the same strain [54] Waris mentions the names of Akbarabadi Mahal and Fatehpuri Mahal as the two favourite slave girls of Shahjahan By far the most shocking suggestion (is) that he had improper relations with his daughter Jahan Ara. Bernier says 'Begum Sahib the elder daughter of Shahjahan, was very handsome and of lively parts and passionately beloved by her father Rumour has it that his attachment reached a point which it is difficult to believe the justification of which he rested on the decision of Mullahs' or doctors of law According to them it would have been unique to deny the King the privilege of gathering fruit from

[54] P 27 ibid

the tree he had himself planted Vincent Smith has it that the earliest evidence of this incestuous connection is to be found in De Laet, and that it is confirmed by Thomas Herbert.

Let us now see what the *Maharashtreeya Jnyan Kosh*[3] has to say about Shahjahan's demeanour Shahjahan (1593 1658) the fifth Mogul Emperor Shahbuddin Mohammad Kiran alias Shahjahan was the son of Jahangir Salim from a Jodhpur princess He came to the throne through the efforts of Nur Jahan and Asaf Khan While his father was alive Shahjahan rebelled against him twice or thrice but without success On coming to the throne (1628) he killed all his (near) relations Defeating Shahji in 1637 he annexed the entire Ahmadnagar territory He used to take special precautions against Europeans coming to India and he never tolerated their meddling in religious affairs. On the ground that the Portuguese indulged in religious persecution Shahjahan sent an expedition against their settlement on the banks of the Hooghly ransacked it and had all their property confiscated He tried to capture Kandahar from the Persians but didn't succeed Asaf Khan's daughter Mumtaz was Shahjahan's wife From her he had in all 14 children including eight sons and six daughters Of these eight died during infancy For eight years he remained a prisoner of his son (Aurangzeb) and died in 1666 in incarceration

The above gist of Shahjahan's lechery and cruelty is enough to counter all talk of Shahjahan's having had any special attachment for Mumtaz. She was just one among the 5000 consorts in his harem in

[3] P (S) 13 *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* ibid. Vol 20

addition to the many wives, sisters and daughters of his courtiers and subjects and slaves which he used to help himself with for immoderate sexual gratification.

Far from Mumtaz's death bereaving Shahjahan, the latter made his wife a political tool even in her death He used her death as a convenient pretext to requisition *Jaisingh's magnificent hereditary palace thereby* denuding one more Hindu of his wealth and power, since Shahjahan had a deep hatred for the Hindus

By his very nature—stingy, conceited and lecherous—Shahjahan was the last man to spend any money on such sentimental projects as building a tomb for one of the many women he flirted with whether in his harem or out of it.

Like all other so-called Muslim tombs—i e Hindu buildings used by them first as residences and later as burial places—the Taj Mahal too is not a single tomb but an ancient Hindu mansion reduced to a burial ground Besides Mumtaz, Shahjahan himself lies buried by her side. But that is not all There are two other graves in the same precincts

Mr Kanwar Lal observes,[58] "At the other end of the Jilokhana, towards the east, there are again two buildings These are the tombs of Satiunnisa (Khanam) who was a favourite attendant of Mumtaz Mahal and who was entrusted with the task of looking after the temporary tomb of Mumtaz Mahal at Burhanpur Similar is the tomb of Sarhandi Begum, another of Shahjahan's queens. The two structures are built exactly alike"

About Satiunnisa Khanum's tomb Keene observes

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[58] P 69, *The Taj* by Kanwar Lal, ibid

on pages 161 162 of his *Handbook* 'The body *said to be* buried there was of Mumtaz s devoted maid The tomb (built by Shahjahan) is said to have cost Rs. 30 000 She died a childless widow at Lahore in 1647 The quarter at Agra known as Chutti Khana (a corrupt on for Sati Khana) was founded by her The tomb proper consists of a high octagonal plinth round a central octagonal mortuary chamber That Satiunnisa Khanum is buried somewhere around the Taj is based on good authority but the special assign ment to her of this particular tomb has no better foundation than popular belief

That shows that like every other detail about the Taj Mahal legend even the Satiunnisa Khanum tomb is a concoction All such tomb-like mounds were erected in usurped Hindu mansions so that H ndus may not reclaim and re-use those buildings. The Muslims knew of the Hindu weakness of not disturbing or reclaiming sepulchral sites So erecting false triangular gravel ke mounds was like posting a strong military contingent or planting a scarecrow which cost practically nothing. It was a simple device a strategic totem to claim H ndu bu ldings for Islam and it worked adm rably Now at this distance of time scholars l ke Keene find that the so-called tomb may not contain the stated corpse

But there are also other details in Keene s noting wh ch are worth closer study Firstly who would worry about carrying a mere maid s festering corpse all the way from Lahore to Agra—a distance of about 400 m les—in those days of pedestrian transports? Secondly why would Shahjahan spend Rs 30 000 on it when he made thousands of labourers slave on Koranic engravings and sealing the superfluous apart

ments of the erstwhile Hindu mansion without paying them even a single pie? Thirdly how could a mere maid found a locality named Sati Khana in Agra? What does founding mean? The Sati Khana is the ancient part of Agra reserved for Hindu women going Sati i e burning themselves on the pyre of their dead husbands This shows how Muslim history has made fabulous claims to everything in Hindusthan in the name of even lowly illiterate burqa-covered Muslim maids, potters and water-carriers Fourthly its octagonal shape clearly indicates that it is an erst while Hindu building. The octagon is a peculiar Hindu shape with Ramayanic sanctity since Ayodhya, the capital of Rama was octagonal Only Hindus have special names for the eight directions and anything connected with god or king has to be octagonal to in dicate their ubiquitous authority Fourthly did even the maid s lifetime wages amount so much as to Rs 30 000 to justify that much expenditure on her tomb? Was her house worth much more if even her tomb cost Rs 30 000? Has the emperor Shahjahan built similar tombs for all the maids of his court? Would as stingy and cruel a monarch as Shahjahan spend the princely sum of Rs 30 000 on a mere maid s tomb? And if 5 000 harem women had a minimum retinue of 10 000 maids could Shahjahan hope to build a Taj Mahal for each consort and a subsidiary sepul chral annexe for every maid?

Here we would like the reader to consider whether throughout his life Shahjahan had nothing else to do except build tombs even for maid servants and his queens And how come that his queen Sarhindi Be bum and Mumtaz s maid are buried in identical structures? Did he want to dishonour the queen in

her death by reducing her to the status of the maid servant? Or did Shahjahan want to elevate the maid Satiunnisa Khanam to the royal status? The obvious explanation is that the Hindu palace complex commandeered by Shahjahan had many towers pavilions and apartments Since it was all a grab and use affair two symmetrical apartments were used to bury a queen and a maid in respectively

Had Sarhandi Begum died earlier and Mumtaz later our history books may have rapturously described a concocted romance between Shahjahan and Sarhandi Begum to justify his building of the Taj Mahal as a fabulous tomb for her Indian histories relating to the Muslim period are, therefore false assumptions later stuffed with concocted descriptions to justify and explain away those fantastic illogical baffling and absurd assumptions

CHAPTER XV

SHAHJAHAN'S REIGN NEITHER GOLDEN NOR PEACEFUL

TO CONSIDER *Shahjahan's reign a golden and peaceful* period of history, as is commonly asserted in all accounts of his rule enabling him to build temples, mosques, forts and palaces galore, is a travesty of the truth His was one of the most troubled reigns *full of pestilence warfare and famine* *That it was* peaceful is asserted merely to justify the false credit given to him for constructing such magnificent buildings as the Taj Mahal in Agra and the Red Fort in Delhi

We have already noticed how an overwhelming majority of his subjects—namely about 99 per cent non-Muslim residents of India were subjected to beastly tyranny They were tortured and persecuted and their temples were being constantly demolished *We have also seen how Shahjahan murdered* all his relatives who could possibly lay any claim to the throne or question his autocratic rule Keene says,[39] "Shahjahan surpassed all the Moghul emperors in autocratic pride, and was the first of them to safe*guard the throne by murdering all possible rivals.*"

Can the regime of a ruler, by any stretch of imagination be termed a golden and peaceful period, when the virtue of no woman is safe and the life and property of no man secure? Can it be a golden and

[39] P 38 *Keene's Handbook* ibid

peaceful period if it is full of unending wars and revolts?

Shahjahan had neither the time, money and security nor the vision to build the magnificent buildings—the Red Fort and the so-called Jama Masjid in Delhi, and the Taj Mahal in Agra

Shahjahan did not have resources enough to raise even a scaffolding for alterations in the Hindu buildings he usurped, not to talk of his ever dreaming of raising any buildings of his own. We have Tavernier's testimony for this. He says,[60] "It is said that the scaffolding alone cost more than the entire work (concerning the burial of Mumtaz), because, from want of wood they had all to be of brick as well as the supports of arches This has entailed much labour and heavy expenditure" It is for the reader to judge whether a monarch who cannot muster enough timber even to raise a scaffolding can ever hope to raise any building worth the name during his life time

"The emperor Jahangir died on 27th October, 1627 (and)

"Shahjahan ascended the throne at Agra on 6th February 1628"[61] According to the *Alamgir Nama* of Mohammad Kazim,[62] Shahjahan lost effective control of the throne when he fell ill on the 8th September 1657 and his sons rose in revolt, fighting against one another to gain the crown

Shahjahan's reign thus lasted for 29 years and seven months

The whole of this period was full of incessant wars, revolts, repressive campaigns and famines and the

[60] P 111, *Travels in India* by Tavernier, ibid.
[61] Pp. 5-6, Elliot & Dowson, *History* ibid., Vol VII
[62] P 178 ibid

reader will find below a year by year account of Shahjahan's reign which should serve to effectively refute the traditional concept that it was a period of peace and plenty during which all that he needed to do to beguile the tedium of every hour was to make love to women and sodomic minions and raise huge buildings as though through sheer magic.

The account[43] as compiled from Elliot and Dowson's translation of extracts from *Badshahnama* by Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori *Shahjahannama* by Inayat Khan *Badshahnama* by Mahomad Waris *Amal i Salih* by Mahommad Salih Kambu *Shahjahannama* by Mahommad Sadik Khan is as follows

1 At the accession of Shahjahan Jajhar son of Nar Singh Deo left the capital Agra, and proceeded to Undchha his stronghold where he set about raising forces A force was sent against him under Mahabatkhan Khan Khana

2. In the campaign against Khan Jahan a battle was fought near Dholpur

3 In the third year of the reign, 8 000 horses were sent to conquer Nasik and Trimbak.

4 Jadurai his sons, grandsons and relations held mansabs from the imperial government. Jadurai with his two sons Ujla and Raghu and grandson Baswant were pounced upon and killed

5 A campaign was undertaken against Nizam Shah and Khan Jahan, around Devalgaon Baglan Sangamner Chagdor fort Bheer Shegaon Dharangaon Chalisgaon and Manjira fort. Mansurgarh was captured

6 In the 4th year of the reign Khan Jahan took

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[43] Pp 3 133 ibid

to flight past Depalpur, Ujjain and Navlai Nearly 400 Afghans and 200 Bundelas in his force were slain Dharur fort was captured

7 Parenda (lying between Ahmednagar and Sholapur) was attacked

8 The fort of Situnda about 50 miles north-east of Aurangabad, was captured

9 Kandahar (25 miles south west of Nanded and 75 miles east of Dharur) was taken.

10 Operations against Mohammad Adil Shah of Bijapur were undertaken in the 5th year of the reign.

11 The emperor returned to the capital Agra from Burhanpur after a long stay, tired and angry, because Azam Khan had proved ineffective in managing the affairs in the Deccan.

12 Hugli fort was captured

13 The fort of Galna was the scene of another campaign.

14 In the 6th year of the reign Bhagirath Bhil chief of his tribe in Malwa rose in revolt.

15 In this same year an extensive campaign was undertaken to destroy Hindu temples.

16 Daulatabad was conquered

17 Kasim Khan and Kambu brought 400 Christians under guard The prisoners including females were asked to turn Muslims or face torture and death

18 In the 7th year of the reign, Prince Shah Shuja marched against Parenda fort. Many engagements were fought in its neighbourhood

19 Jajhar Singh Bundela and his son Bikramajit rose in rebellion The campaign against them centered around Bhander Undchha and Chauragarh fort This campaign like many others is a sickening tale of brutal torture by Shahjahan s forces.

20 The fort of Jhansi was captured

21. The imperial army was despatched to subdue the Nizamshah

22. In the ninth year of his reign the emperor himself proceeded south to participate in the campaign to reduce Kandahar, Nanded, Udgir, Usa, Ahmednagar, Ashte, Junnar, Sangamner, Nasik Trimbak and Masij

23 Khan Jahan and Khan Zaman headed campaigns against Bijapur Battles were fought at Udgir, Indapur, Bhalki, Kalyan Dharasheev, Mahuli and Lohagaon. Khan Zaman entered Bijapur territories and plundered and destroyed every inhabited place he came to . records the *Badshahnama* of Abdul Hamid Kolhapur was captured, Miraj and Raibag were plundered and the forts Anki, Tanki and Alka Palka (36 miles from Daulatabad) were captured

24 In the 10th year of the reign, the fort of Junir was captured The pursuit of Shahu through the Dakhin across Mahuli and Muranjan led to Shahu's surrender along with the young Nizamshah They were also required to surrender forts Junir Trimbak, Tringalwadi, Haris, Judhan, Jund and Harsira

25 The Bundelas rose in revolt under Prithviraj, son of Jhajhar, who had escaped earlier massacres

26 Zafar Khan, governor of Kashmir, was ordered to proceed against Tibet, with 80,000 horse and foot

27 In the 11th year of the reign Kandahar and other forts were captured

28 Kuch Haju ruled by Parikshit and Kuchbihar by Lakshminarayan rose in revolt

29 A campaign was undertaken in Baglana area comprising nine forts, 34 parganas and 1 001 villages

30 In the 12th year of the reign Manikraj, Raja of Chetgaon was subdued

31 A punitive expedition was sent against Sangi Bemkhal, ruler of Great Tibet, who had seized Burang in Little Tibet.

32. In the 13th year of the reign, an attacking *force advanced from Sistan against Kandahar Khan* shi fort near Bust was first captured but later abandoned

33 Prithviraj son of Jhajhar, was captured and imprisoned in *Gwalior Fort*

34 In the 14th year of the reign, an expedition was sent to chastise the rebellious Kolis and Kathis in Gujarat and against the Jam of Kathiawar

35 Jagat Singh, son of Raja Basu of Kangra led a revolt against the emperor

36 In the 15th year of the reign, a campaign was launched against Jagat Singh. Mu, Nurpur and other forts were captured

37 In the 17th year of the reign, the imperial forces had to be sent against the Raja of Palamau

38 In the 19th year of the reign, a campaign was undertaken against Balkh and Badakshan which were keys to the acquisition of Samarkand Murad Baksh was sent with 50 000 horse and 10 000 musketeers rocketmen, gunners etc. The emperor himself had to proceed to Kabul The fort of Kahmard was captured, and Kundaz and Balkh were conquered

39 Sadullakhan had to subdue rebellious elements in the conquered territories

40 Aurangzeb, who had been sent to the troubled territories had to surrender Balkh and Badakshan to Nazar Mohammad Khan and retreat in the 20th year of Shahjahan's reign

41 In the 22nd year of the reign the Persians advanced against Kandahar The imperial army was sent to defend the territories but Bust and Kandahar had to be surrendered after long and desperate battles

42. Peoples in the territories of Gazni complained of total destruction of their crops, and plunder of their belongings by Shahjahan's armies in the 23rd year of the reign

43 The Tibetan campaign resulted in the subjugation of that area in the 25th year of the reign An immense force was also despatched for the recapture of Kandahar

44 The siege of Kandahar continued through the 26th and 27th years of the reign

45 In the 28th year, Allami was ordered to demolish Chittor and chastise the Rana.

46 In the 29th year of the reign a campaign was launched for the capture of Golkonda and Hyderabad

47 In the 30th year of his reign, Shahjahan ordered his son Aurangzeb to lead a campaign against Bijapur

48 During this period which marked the end of Shahjahan's troubled reign the imperial army had also another irrepressible enemy in Raja Jaswant Singh

Incessant wars, revolts and plunder with the consequent dislocation in all productive activity and destruction of all produce reduced Shahjahan's helpless subjects to acute distress Here is a sampling of what horrors and privations they experienced

The description is taken verbatim from Shahjahan's own official chronicler's account, namely from the *Badshahnama* of Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori

Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori begins the account[44]

[44] Pp 19 25 ibid

of the fourth year of Shahjahan s reign i e 1630 the very year in which Mumtaz is believed to have died on page 338 of Vol 1 On page 362 continuing the narrative[43] of that year of the reign he writes In the present year also there had been a deficiency in the bordering countries and total want in the Dakhin and Gujarat. The inhabitants of these two countries (regions) was reduced to the direst extremity Life *was offered for a loaf but none would buy rank was* to be sold for a cake but none would care for it the ever bountious hand was now stretched to beg for food and the feet which had always trodden the way of contentment walked about only in search of sus tenance For a long time dog s flesh was sold (as) goat s flesh and the pounded bones of the dead were *mixed with flour and sold When this was discovered* the sellers were brought to justice Destitution at length reached such a pitch that men began to devour each other and the flesh of a son was preferred to his love The numbers of the dying caused obstruc tions in the roads and every man whose dire suffer ings did not terminate in death and who retained the *power to move wandered off to the towns and villages* of other countries Those lands which had been fa mous for their fertility and plenty now retained no trace of productiveness The emperor directed the officials in Burhanpur Ahmedabad and the country of Surat to establish soup kitchens

One can well imagine the diseases that may have raged because of dog s flesh being sold in place of mutton a son s flesh eaten by his parents and pound ed bones of carcasses being mixed with grain flour

[43] Ibid

1630 was the precise year in which Mumtaz is said to have died according to one version. The city of Burhanpur, where she died was in the midst of the famine area since it is in the Deccan and is specifically mentioned as such above.

Now it is up to the reader to figure out whether, in such a year of acute distress, Shahjahan would ever launch on a fabulous project like building a monument over the body of his deceased wife Mumtaz. Moreover, such distress was not peculiar to the fourth year of the reign The author of the *Badshahnama* in the extract quoted above begins with the words "In the present year also" which show that famine was endemic What monarch dare begin a massive monument in such conditions! And how would he have the money or the workmen to build an expensive memorial to love when people were dying like flies!

Shahjahan's whole life from his very childhood was one of strife In the account of his life in the *Maharashtreeya Jnyankosh* quoted earlier we have already shown that even while a prince Shahjahan had risen in revolt against his father Emperor Jahangir twice or thrice

It should also be remembered that in the heyday of the Moghul dynasty, from Babur to Aurangzeb Shahjahan was the only monarch who was deposed during his life time and died a prisoner of his own son after nearly eight years of incarceration

Had Shahjahan's reign been marked by peace and plenty, the news of his illness would not have resulted in open revolt by all his sons and other subjects But that such unprecedented political upheaval did take place only shows how his entire household and realm was seething with trouble and discontent Here is

what the *Alamgir Nama* of Mohammad Kazim[66] says about the end of Shahjahan's inglorious reign "On *8th of September 1657 the Emperor Shahjahan was* seized with illness. His illness lasted for a long time and every day he grew weaker so that he was unable to attend to the business of the state. Irregularities of all sorts occurred in the administration, and great disturbances arose in the wide territories of Hindusthan. The unworthy and frivolous Dara Shikoh considered himself heir apparent and notwithstanding his want of ability for the kingly office he endeavoured with the scissors of greediness to cut the robes of the Imperial dignity into a shape suited for his unworthy person.

Great disorders arose in the affairs of the state Disaffected and rebellious men raised their heads in mutiny and strife on every side Turbulent raiyats refused to pay their revenue The seed of rebellion was sown in all directions and by degrees the evil reached such a height that in Gujarat Murad Baksh took his seat upon the throne ... Shuja took the same course in Bengal"

If Shahjahan's reign had been the golden period that it is wrongly described to have been such utter chaos and countrywide rebellion would never have erupted when he fell ill The passage quoted above proves *beyond all doubt that discontentment, disorder* punitive campaigns famines corruption massacres and immorality marked Shahjahan's entire reign. That was why discontentment seething under his oppressive hold manifested itself throughout his realm as soon as news of his illness was known Had his rule been wise and benevolent the news of his illness would

66 Pp 178-179 ibid.

have evoked a touching response from his subjects Far from that even his own sons rose in open revolt. What greater indictment could there be of Shahjahan's (mis)rule! Such was not the case with India's Rajput rulers because they were good fathers benevolent rulers and noble human beings

Even the quick survey made above shows that in a 30-year reign Shahjahan conducted at least 48 campaigns which gives us an average of more than one and a half campaigns per year That means Shahjahan's entire reign was marked by unceasing warfare. And yet current historical texts assert without any justification that Shahjahan's reign was a golden and peaceful period

In addition to such incessant warfare various regions under Shahjahan's control were often subject to famines Far from being a peaceful and glorious period therefore Shahjahan's rule was one of the most horrid periods of Indian history This knocks the bottom out of the concocted descriptions unsupported by any evidence documentary or circumstantial ascribing the authorship of the so-called Jama Masjid and the Red Fort in Delhi and the Taj Mahal in Agra to Shahjahan.

Tamerlain in his memoirs alludes both to Old Delhi and its Jama Masjid Tamerlain was in Old Delhi in the Christmas of 1398 i e about 230 years before Shahjahan came to the throne Tamerlain notes [67]

On Sunday it was brought to my notice that a great number of infidel Hindus had assembled in the Masjid i Jami of Old Delhi carrying with them arms and

[67] Pp. 446-447 ibid., Vol III translation of *Malfuzat-i Timuri or Tuzak-i Timuri* the Autobiography of Timur

provisions and were preparing to defend themselves This gives a direct lie to the assertion that Shahjahan built the Jami Masjid and also founded Old Delhi.

Tamerlain also specifically refers to the fort of Old Delhi He says[68] 'With my mind no longer occupied with the destruction of the people of Delhi I took a ride round the cities Siri is a round city The buildings are lofty They are surrounded by fortifications built of stone and brick and they are very strong Old Delhi also has a similar strong fort but it is larger than that of Siri From the fort of Siri to that of Old Delhi which is a considerable distance there runs a strong wall built of stone and cement The part called Jahanpanah is situated in the midst of the inhabited city The fortifications of the three cities have 30 gates seven on the south bearing towards the east and six on the north side bearing towards the west Siri has seven gates four towards the outside and three on the inside towards Jahanpanah The fortifications of Old Delhi have 10 gates opening towards the interior and some towards the exterior of the city I appointed an officer to protect the Musalman quarter of that city '

So 230 years before Shahjahan we have Tamerlain meticulously referring to Old Delhi its fort the city gates and the Muslim localities namely the area around what is now the Jama Masjid It is surprising how despite this clear description Indian historical texts blatantly assert that all the above buildings and Old Delhi itself were raised by Shahjahan.

This is clear proof of what Sir H M Elliot has termed the impudent and interested fraud of me-

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[68] Pp 447-448 ibid

diaeval Muslim chronicles

When the founding of the city of Old Delhi, and the building of the (Red) fort of Old Delhi and the Jama Masjid of Old Delhi have been falsely ascribed to Shahjahan, as noted above, it is no wonder if the Taj Mahal in Agra too has been undeservedly credited to him

CHAPTER XVI

BABUR LIVED IN THE TAJ MAHAL

It is sometimes innocently asked by history teachers that if the Taj Mahal had existed centuries before Shahjahan how is it there are no earlier references to it. There are three answers to this question. Firstly the Taj Mahal being then a palace and not a monument open for public inspection as it now is used to be closely guarded It was accessible only to the elite and then only on invitation or conquest. As such one cannot expect the same prolific references to it *as one comes across in these days of publicity and* modern communications

The second answer is that ancient and mediaeval India teemed with mansions palaces and temples of bewildering and bewitching variety so much so that being all very spectacular one could not be distinguished from another by mere description. All that could come down to us or could be recorded by any visitor is that they are of indescribable beauty or "wonderful attractive magnificent." For instance in India under British rule there were about 568 native rulers Most of them owned many beautiful, luxurious palaces Can any description distinguish one from the other specifically? Would not those who happened to visit those palaces merely say that they were magnificent? Similarly mediaeval chronicles are full of praise for Indian mansions and palaces but

the problem is how to tell one from the other at this distance of time It may also be remembered that their ownership and names of localities and roads keep changing with every historical upheaval That presents another difficulty in identifying a building which we see today with its mediaeval address and antecedents A practical instance is provided by descriptions in Muslim chronicles of a magnificent Krishna temple in Mathura which Mohammad Ghazni says could not have been completed even in 200 years and another in Vidisha (modern Bhilsa) which took 300 years to build To those who ask us why we find no mention of the Taj Mahal before Shahjahan we would like to ask in turn how those magnificent temples in Mathura and Vidisha find no mention before the Muslim invaders? The answer is simple Either the earlier descriptions have been lost or nobody bothered to make any specific mention of them because India teemed with such temples Even in one single city powerful and affluent Indian rulers had at least a dozen palaces all rivalling one another in beauty and expense How then could one be distinguished from the other in mere recorded descriptions? The records if any would only refer to the Raja s palace—one or the other

Despite such very good reasons for not expecting any identifiable antecedents in earlier records of what is at present known as Taj Mahal luckily Babur the founder of the Moghul dynasty in India who was the great great gandfather of emperor Shahjahan has left us a disarming and unmistakable description of the Taj Mahal if only we have the understanding to grasp it So our third answer to the question why no mention is found in earlier chronicles of the Taj

Mahal and other buildings is that though many a time there is a clear mention of such buildings, our senses benumbed by traditional tutoring fail to grasp their significance Such is the case with the Taj Mahal

On page 192, Vol II of the *Memoirs* Emperor Babur tells us [49] "On Thursday (May 10, 1526) afternoon I entered Agra and took up my residence at Sultan Ibrahim's palace" Later on page 251 Babur adds "A few days after the Id we had a great feast (July 11, 1526) in the grand hall which is adorned with the peristyle of stone pillars under the dome in the centre of Sultan Ibrahim's palace"

It may be recalled that Babur captured Delhi and Agra by defeating Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat As such he came to occupy the Hindu palaces which Ibrahim Lodi, himself an alien conqueror was occupying Babur therefore, calls the palace at Agra which he occupied, as Ibrahim's palace

In describing it Babur says that the palace is adorned with the peristyle of stone pillars This is a clear allusion to the four white ornamental towers at the corners of the Taj Mahal plinth He then describes a "grand hall" which is obviously the magnificent room which now houses the cenotaphs of Mumtaz and Shahjahan Babur further tells us that in the centre it had a dome We know that the central cenotaph chamber has a dome It is said to be centrally situated because it is surrounded by eight rooms Thus it is

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[49] Pp 192 and 251 *Memoirs of Zehir Ed Din Mohamad Babur*, Emperor of Hindustan, Vol II written by himself in the Chaghatai Turki.

Translated by John Leyden and William Erskine annotated and revised by Sir Lucas King in two volumes Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press 1921

clear that Babur lived in the palace currently known as the Taj Mahal from May 10, 1526 until his death on December 26, 1530, intermittently That means that we have a clear record of the existence of the Taj Mahal at least 100 years before the death of Mumtaz (the so-called Lady of the Taj) in 1630 Despite such a clear mention our histories and accounts of the Taj Mahal the world over blandly assert that the Taj Mahal was built as a tomb on an open plot of land by an inconsolable Shahjahan lamenting the death of his wife

Babur's mention of the Taj Mahal is, therefore, the fourth direct proof of the Taj Mahal being an ancient palace The first three direct proofs were — the mention by Shahjahan's own official chronicle that the Taj Mahal was Mansingh's and Jaisingh's palace, a similar admission by Mr Nurul Hasan Siddiqui on page 31 of his book *The City of Taj* and the statement of Tavernier on page 111 of his *Travels In India* that the cost of the scaffolding was more than that of the entire work concerning the mausoleum The significance of that statement we have explained earlier

It may then be asked how the Taj palace which was under the occupation of Emperor Shahjahan's great great grandfather, Babur, passed out of the family's possession and was owned in Shahjahan's time by Jaisingh? The explanation is that Babur's son Humayun had been bereft of all his father's (Babur's) conquests in India and had to flee a fugitive He did return to India but died within six months of his conquest of Delhi Soon after Babur's death, therefore, many territories, cities and buildings passed into Hindu hands Among these were Fatehpur Sikri Agra and the Taj Mahal. It may be recalled that Akbar the

grandson of Babur had to begin all over again He had to win a decisive victory at Panipat against Hemu a Hindu general before he obtained possession of Delhi and Agra and Fatehpur Sikri At that time the Taj Mahal at Agra passed into the possession of the Jaipur Hindu royal family which was later forced to lend its daughters to Akbar's harems Mansingh a scion of the Jaipur royal house who was a contemporary and a vassal of Akbar was the owner of the Taj Mahal And according to the *Badshahnama* it was from Mansingh s grandson Jaisingh, that the Taj Mahal was commandeered for burying Mumtaz.

Vincent Smith[70] tells us that ' Babur's turbulent life came to a peaceful end in his garden palace at Agra ' This again is emphatic proof that Babur died in the Taj Mahal Taj Mahal is the only palace in Agra which had a spectacular garden. The *Badshahnama* refers to the garden as *sabz zamini*" meaning verdant spacious lofty, lush garden precincts.

Babur being a newcomer to India he still retained a nostalgic attachment to his West Asian homeland He had therefore expressed a wish to be buried near Kabul Accordingly his body was carried there. But for this fortuitous occurrence according to the habit of the usurping Muslims in India, he may have been buried in the Taj Mahal where he had been living at the time of his death Had he been buried there our histories would have lustily described Humayun's great mythical attachment to his father Babur inducing him to ' build ' the Taj Mahal as a wonder tomb for Babur

Again, if instead of Mumtaz, Shahjahan s other

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[70] P 90 *Akbar the Great Moghul* by Vincent Smith.

queen Sarhandi Begum, who at present lies buried in an outer apartment of the Taj Mahal, had died in 1630, she may have been buried in the central chamber of the domed and usurped Hindu mansion In that case our histories would have contained concocted descriptions of Shahjahan's infatuation for Sarhandi Begum instead of for Mumtaz.

Thus the Taj Mahal once barely missed being turned into Babur's tomb in 1530 A D and once again barely missed being known to posterity as Sarhandi Begum's tomb over a hundred years later In those eventualities our histories and tourist literature would have devised suitable explanations about Humayun's fancied affection for his father or Shahjahan's infatuation for Sarhandi Begum instead of for Mumtaz Such are the concoctions which all current mediaeval history books trot out to suit their fanciful assumptions

That the first Moghul emperor Babur lived and died in the Taj Mahal is further confirmed by his daughter *Gulbadan Begum (Princess Rose-Body) in the chroni*cle titled *Humayun Nama* (The History of Humayun) translated into English by Annette S Beveridge

On pages 109 and 110 of the translated version Gulbadan Begum records that (Babur's) "death took place on Monday, December 26, 1530 They brought out our paternal aunt and our mothers on the pretence that the doctors were coming to look All rose They took all the begums (harem women) and my mothers to the Great House" (A footnote on page 109 describes the Great House as a palace)

"The death was kept concealed On Friday December 29, 1530 Humayun mounted the throne" A footnote on page 110 says "Babur's body was laid first in the Ram or Aram Bagh, on the opposite side of the

river from the present Taj Mahal. Later it was taken to Kabul."

The above passages make it quite clear that Babur died in the Taj Mahal. When it was known that he was dead the harem women were removed to a palace called The Great House which could be what is called the Ram Bagh alias Aram Bagh palace.

Later, in order that Humayun had to be crowned in the Taj Mahal, Babur's body was removed from the Taj Mahal and was carried across the Yamuna river and laid in the palace called Ram Bagh alias Aram Bagh. This explains the belief among historians and archaeologists that the Ram Bagh Palace in Agra has something to do with Babur's death.

Describing the preparations being made for the wedding feast of Hindal (son of the late emperor Babur and brother of emperor Humayun) Gulbadan Begum writes, "The jewelled throne which my lady had given for the feast was placed in the forecourt of The (Mystic) House and a gold-embroidered diwan was laid in front of it, (on which) His Majesty and the dearest lady sat together. . . .

"In the large octagonal hall (of The Mystic House) was set the jewelled throne, and above and below it were spread out hangings embroidered with gold, and wonderful strings of pearls."

The octagonal hall of the Mystic House is obviously the central octagonal hall of the Taj Mahal in which a hundred years later Shahjahan raised the tomb of Mumtaz, and in 1666 Aurangzeb buried his father emperor Shahjahan. The Taj Mahal is called the Mystic House because it appears to have originated as a Shiva temple.

THE FALSITY OF MEDIAEVAL MUSLIM CHRONICLES

SIR H M ELLIOT a well known historian has observed in the preface to his eight volume study of numerous mediaeval Muslim chronicles that they are an impudent and interested fraud He fully justifies his conclusion by his comments during the study of those chronicles Here we quote his observations regarding Muslim chronicles which purport to record for posterity events of the fourth generation Moghul emperor Jahangir Lay readers and even students of history have been kept blissfully in the dark about the utter unreliability of these chronicles

It should also be remembered that Jahangir was the father of Emperor Shahjahan whose authorship of the Taj Mahal and the famous Peacock Throne we are challenging in this book

Sir H. M Elliot s observations about the *Jahangir nama* apply equally forcefully to all mediaeval Muslim chronicles They are all classic examples of gross exaggerations false claims suppressions of truth and blatant misrepresentations For instance wherever they say that the Muslim rulers destroyed temples and built mosques all that they mean is that they just used temples as mosques by uprooting and throwing away the image

Wherever Muslim chronicles claim that Muslim rulers or noblemen founded towns built forts and con

structed roads and bridges or dug wells and tanks their claims are invariably false They came to India to enjoy ready wealth and mansions but not to toil and build Neither did they have the time money patience security need, acumen skill resources or personnel to attempt any building or construction. They do not have even a single book in their ancient or mediaeval literature on any architecture of their own.

All the above observations are fully illustrated in Sir H M Elliot s appraisal of chronicles concerning Jahangir's reign He observes [1]

'There are several works which profess to be the Autobiographical Memoirs of the Emperor Jahangir and there is confusion in their titles There are two distinct editions of the Memoirs which differ entirely from each other Major Price translated the one Anderson wrote upon the other It will be seen also that there are varieties of each edition.

"A few instances may as well be adduced to show the exaggeration of the *Tarikh i-Salim Shah*[2]—

"At page 2 of Major Price s translation it is said 'On this occasion I made use of the throne prepared by my father and enriched it at an expense without parallel for the celebration of the festival of the year at the entrance of the Sun into Aries In the fabrication of the throne a sum not far short of ten krours of ashrafies of five mithkals the ashrefy was expended in jewel alone a krour being the term of an hundred lakhs and a lakh being 100 000 independently of 300 mauns of gold Hindustani measure, employed in the workmanship each maun of Hind being equal to ten mauns of Iraq'

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[1] P 251 Elliot & Dowson *History* ibid., Vol. VI

[2] Pp. 257 260 ibid

The translator converts the value of jewels alone into 150 millions sterling!—an incredible sum as he justly observes but the more sober statement of the *Tuzak i Jahangiri* says only sixty lakhs of ashrafis and fifty mauns of gold Hindustani measure and there is no mention of the throne in the authentic Memoirs.

A little below we read Having thus seated my self on the throne of my expectations and wishes I caused also the Imperial crown which my father had caused to be made after the manner of that which was worn by the great kings of Persia, to be brought before me and then in the presence of the whole assembled Ameers having placed it on my brows as an omen auspicious to the stability and happiness of my reign kept it there for the space of a full astronomical hour On each of the 12 points of this *crown was a single diamond of the value of one lakh* of ashrefies of five mithkals the whole purchased by my father with the resources of his own government not from anything accruing to him by inheritance from his predecessors At the point in the centre of the top part of the crown was a single pearl of four mith kals of the value of one lakh of ashrefies and on dif ferent parts of the same were set altogether 200 rubies of one mithkal each and each of the value of 6000 rupees Altogether this superb symbol of supreme power may be valued at two millions sterling In the smaller work and in the authentic Memoirs there is no mention whatever of this costly crown

At page 5 Jahangir says he remitted certain sources of revenue 'which yielded to his father no less than 1600 Hindustany mauns of gold equal to 16000 mauns of Irak' The Tuzak says 60 mauns Hindus

tany and the authentic Memoirs give no sum

"At page 14 he says that 'the workmanship alone of the citadel of Agra was compelled at the expense of not less than 180 lakhs of ashrefies of five mithkals each,' which the translator with a note of admiration converts into 26,550 000,- The Tuzak gives only 36 lakhs of rupees, and the authentic memoirs 35 lakhs of rupees

"At page 15 he says that 'the temple which had been built by Raja Mansingh and which the king demolished for the purpose of raising a mosque on its ruins cost in its construction nearly 36 lakhs of five mithkaly ashrefies' which as the translator says is 5 40 00 000 rupees' The Tuzak says only 8,00 000 rupees.

"At page 32 he sends to Shahzada Parwez a chaplet of pearl of the value of 5 00 000 rupees. The Tuzak says 100 000

"At page 34 he says 'that Daulat Khan left at his death property equivalent according to the translator to 120 000 000|-' The Tuzak says only 300 000 tumans of jewels besides gold and other specie

"At page 37 he states 'that the property of his brother Daniel amounted in jewels to five crore of ashrefies and two crore in treasure of the same currency of 63 000,000,- sterling' The Tuzak is silent as to the amount

"At page 51 the tiara of Himu is said 'to have been set with diamonds sapphires rubies, emeralds and pearls, to the value of sixty lacs of ashrefies or 5 400 000,- sterling" The Tuzak says only 80,000 Tumans.

"At page 67 in speaking of the preparations for the pursuit of his son Khusru he says, '40 000 horses

feeding in his own stables and 100 000 camels were brought out and distributed' The Tuzak has nothing on the subject.

At page 79 he says he 'delivered to Jameil Beb 100 000 ashrefies to be distributed amongst the Badakshanians and that he ordered 50 000 rupees to be distributed among the Durwaishes at Adjmeir' The Tuzak gives the sum at 30 000 rupees and mentions nothing about the donations to the Badakshanians

At page 88 'the jewel chest of Khossrou is said to have contained 18 000 000 sterling! It must have been a pretty large and heavy one to have held only £18 000 and the Tuzuk says nothing about its contents

'After these instances of exaggeration who will believe this Valerius 'immoderately augmenting the numbers of all things' There are also other additions and omissions For instance the account of the rebellion and capture of Khusru varies in several essential particulars (in the different copies) and at the conclusion of these occurrences instead of Jahangir s returning to Agra he goes to Kabul as he is said in all other histories to have done

Amongst other omissions a very striking one is that not only is there scarcely any allusion made to his propensity to drinking but he speaks with pious horror of this disgraceful addiction of his brother Daniyal whereas in the true Memoirs there are so many drinking bouts noticed as in the Memoirs of Jahangir s great grandfather Babur and the extraordinary potations to which he confesses would have shamed even that immoderate toper"

Above is just a sampling from Sir H M Elliot s observations made by him from time to time to prove

his conclusion that Muslim chronicles are atrocious concoctions We would like to make some observations of our own since there are many points which escaped the notice of even Sir H M Elliot and other discerning scholars of his type

Every student of Muslim chronicles and visitor to mediaeval monuments would do well to question the very basis of all assertions presented to him and carefully consider whether they are corroborated by other independent evidence and can stand the scrutiny of logic. For instance in the extracts quoted above it may be noted that the fort at Agra is a very ancient Hindu citadel. The amounts mentioned in Muslim chronicles as having been spent on it were merely for repairs. That expenditure was grossly magnified and mere repairs were misrepresented as actual construction of the fort. What is more, even the amount spent on those repairs was extracted from the citizenry by means of a special levy for their own future and effective suppression and slavery

Where Jahangir is said to have destroyed Mansingh s temple and built a mosque over its ruins, all that the reader may gather from it is that Jahangir had the whole temple staff driven out or converted to Islam and a Muslim group installed to throw away the image and use the same building for Muslim prayers. The paltry sum spent on it to uproot the image repair the damaged flooring and add a few minarets was grossly exaggerated and the whole operation misrepresented as the building of a mosque. This has happened throughout India in the entire millenium of Muslim rule

Here it may also be noted that Mansingh was Jahangir s own brother in law and a Hindu courtier who

had incurred the odium of leading military campaigns against his own relatives to consolidate Moghul rule in India And yet Jahangir had the fanatical cheek to destroy a temple built by his own brother-in-law and staunchest of supporters If such was the condition of one of the highest of courtiers closely related to the sovereign by blood ties one may well imagine the plight of those who claimed neither power and position nor royal kinship

The crowns, thrones, cities, forts, palaces, tombs and mansions which Muslim sovereigns and nobility are claimed to have constructed are all flattering concoctions falsely recorded in ink by the facile pens of fawning scribes intent on making easy money by currying royal favour

All those were items looted, usurped, commandeered and misappropriated from pre-Muslim Hindu rulers Muslim chroniclers assessed the value of those captured or looted townships or buildings, perhaps bloated them a little, and recorded them, at the same time misrepresenting the fact that the crowns, thrones, buildings, townships, bridges, canals etc, were constructed by their respective Muslim patrons It is such overlapping prevarication which has given us such fantastic versions that the so-called Kutub Minar was perhaps built by Kutubuddin alone or by Altmash singly or by both of them and Allauddin Khilji and Ferozshah Tughlak partly; and that the cost of the Taj Mahal may be anywhere between four and over 90 million rupees In such cases the very basis of Muslim assertions is misleading This the reader should be clear about in reconstructing the story of the Taj Mahal

It may also be noted that Jahangir was the father of Shahjahan If Jahangir, as we have noted above,

has been branded as a notorious prevaricator, his son Shahjahan was worse. Shahjahan hired the services of Kamgar Khan to forge a new chronicle of Jahangir's reign three years after the latter's death, to carefully eliminate from Jahangir's own chronicle all adverse *references to the rebellious Shahjahan* when the latter was a prince. Testifying to this, Sir H. M. Elliot observes:[13] "He (Kamgar Khan) was at last induced to undertake it (writing a history of Jahangir's reign) at the instigation of the Emperor Shahjahan *in the third year of his reign*."

Jahangir's chronicle contains many flattering references to his father Akbar. Jahangir invariably professes to be a very obedient son overflowing with filial affection. For instance he claims to have built a *tomb for his father (which he did not)*. He says that when later he used to pass by his father's tomb he walked or intended to walk barefoot. Such sentimental falsehoods mushroom throughout Jahangir's chronicle of his reign. They ought to be taken as nothing more than attempts to camouflage Jahangir's atrocious behaviour as a faithless, treacherous son and a cruel despot. Akbar has himself described how Jahangir wanted to poison him. Later when Jahangir did not succeed in secretly poisoning his father Akbar, *the former started an open revolt. Had he* been able to make Akbar a prisoner, he would have tortured his father to death. And yet the whole of the *Jahangirnama* exudes the air of the writer having been a doting son.

Shahjahan had fully inherited this trait and had further perfected it. He had also a host of fawning

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[13] P. 349, ibid.

scribes ready and willing to oblige him by writing any number of false accounts which would represent him as one of the most remarkable monarchs in the world That is why we find our histories loaded with cock and bull accounts of Shahjahan having built the Taj Mahal at Agra the Red Fort and Jama Masjid in Delhi and the city of Old Delhi itself Students of history scholars who teach or write history and visitors to monuments should not believe even a word of the traditional Muslim versions unless they ascertain the truth by subjecting every assertion to close logical scrutiny and corroboration by independent verifying evidence We have therefore to tread warily in wading through a myriad motivated and interested myths in getting at the true antecedents of the Taj Mahal

THE 'LADY OF THE TAJ'

THERE SEEMS to be lot of confusion about the very name of Shahjahan's wife who, we are told, lies buried in the central chamber of the Taj Mahal

It could be that the appellation "Mumtaz Mahal" got affixed to her only when she was buried in a Hindu (Crown) palace which is what the term 'Taj Mahal' signifies. So it is not the building as is commonly asserted which derives its name from the woman. It is vice versa, namely that the woman derives her posthumous title from the magnificent palace in which she had her second burial.

This conclusion of ours is based on Shahjahan's own court chronicle, the *Badshahnama* which says,[74] "On the 17th Zi : Kada, 1040 died Nawab Aliya Begam in the 40th year of her age. She had borne him eight sons and six daughters "

Maulvi Moinuddin Ahmad observes[75] that her original name was Arjumand Banu Begum.

It would now be pertinent to inquire who this so-called "Lady of the Taj" was, what was her status in Shahjahan's household, what was her ancestry and how much was her worth in Shahjahan's eyes?

Arjumand Banu was the grand daughter of Mirza Ghias Beg the Prime Minister of Jahangir, and one of his fathers in law It needs to be pointed out here

[74] P 27, ibid. Vol. VII.

[75] P 3, *The Taj and its Environments* ibid.

that this Ghias Beg was a mere waiter in the Persian court raised to prime ministership in the Moghul court because his beautiful and influential daughter happened to become Jahangir's mistress Thus his grand daughter Mumtaz alias Arjumand Banu Begum was a commoner by birth

Arjumand Banu's father was Khwaja Abul Hasan (also known as Yamin ud-Daula Asaf Khan) and mother, Diwanji Begum Born in 1594[14] Mumtaz was married to Shahjahan in 1612. She was therefore 18 while Shahjahan was 21 years of age at the time of their marriage But she was not Shahjahan's first wife Shahjahan's first wife, the queen was a great grand daughter of the ruler of Persia—Shah Ismail Safwi Shahjahan had numerous other wives and thousands of consorts He not only was married before taking Mumtaz as his wife but also married again after her death. In between these weddings he also used to take consorts by the hundreds into his harem It is, therefore, futile to argue, as is traditionally done, that Shahjahan was so devoted to Mumtaz as to lose all interest in life after her death and that he, therefore, perpetuated her memory in a magnificent monument

The ado that current historical texts make about Shahjahan's mythical infatuation for Mumtaz, is not justified by the historical records of those times Mum-

[14] Even Mumtaz s year of birth like every other detail, seems to be fictitious According to Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori quoted earlier in this chapter, Mumtaz Mahal was in her fortieth year when she died Since she died around 1630 she must have been born *circa* 1590. And yet in Maulvi Moinuddin s book the date of Mumtaz s birth is stated to be 1594

taz was apparently so insignificant an inmate of a harem teeming with 5 000 females that no historian has bothered even to accurately mention the dates of her birth death or burial at Burhanpur, in the Taj garden or under the Taj Mahal dome This is borne out by the following extract [11] "The building of the Taj was commenced in 1630, or one year after the death of Mumtaz Mahal. The date of the completion of the building inscribed on the front gateway is 1057 (1648) It thus took 18 years to complete The cost was three million sterling"

The above passage varies considerably in its details about Mumtaz and Taj Mahal from other accounts quoted heretofore It implies that Mumtaz died in 1629 while others say she died in 1630 or 1631 A D The figure of the cost too is altogether imaginary since it quotes no authority

The author is wrong in believing that 1057 A.H. (1648 A D) inscribed on the front gateway marks the completion of the Taj Mahal It only implies if at all that the Koranic engraving on the Hindu palace was completed on that date The inscriber is vaguely silent precisely from a sense of guilt The surmise that the Taj Mahal took 18 years to build is apparently based on this date and is therefore wrong The year 1630 A D believed to mark the commencement of the construction of the Taj Mahal is obviously mistaken because for all one knows Mumtaz may have been alive until 1631 A D And then it should take at least a year or two to discuss plans to make drawings ac

[11] P 115 *Agra—Historical & Descriptive with an account of Akbar & his Court and of the Modern City of Agra* by Syed Muhammad Latif (Khan Bahadur) printed at Calcutta Central Press Co., Ltd 40 Canning St., Calcutta, 1896

quire land order material, hire labour and begin construction This version too, therefore, proves how the whole Shahjahan legend of the Taj Mahal is all bluff and bluster This 18 year claim also conflicts with Tavernier's claim that the Taj Mahal took 22 years *to build*

The traditional myth of Shahjahan s disconsolate *grief for* Mumtaz is a typical instance of arguing backwards which is fallacious The myth arose from the belief that Shahjahan was the builder of a grand tomb called the Taj Mahal To prop up and sustain that falsehood, other myths were created But the myths are mutually contradictory and inconsistent as all falsehoods are bound to be. The myth sought to be pricked here is about Shahjahan s special and exclusive attachment to Mumtaz meant to justify raising an expensive monument in her memory Had he been so attached there would have been a mention about it in histories But there is not a word about it anywhere The only special romance if any, mentioned in narratives of the Moghul court relates to Jahangir and his consort Nurjahan As regards Shahjahan, tradition first starts from a false premise namely that he built the Taj Mahal as a tomb Then to explain it away—i e justify the huge expense incurred on it, and its beauty—it is presumed that he must have been greatly attached to her This is what we mean by 'arguing backwards'

*During the 18 years of her married life (for Mum*taz died in 1630) she bore 14 children (eight sons and six daughters) of whom seven survived her That meant in no single year was she free from pregnancy, which shows Shahjahan's utter disregard for his wife's health so much so that Mumtaz died soon after her

last delivery She was then only 37 years old [78] Since she died at Burhanpur her body was buried there Had Shahjahan really cared for her he could have built a monument where his wife was first buried Six months later the body was exhumed which was a sacrilege and violation of the tenets of Islam to be taken to Agra. As a matter of fact if the Taj Mahal took 10 to 22 years or so to build according to traditional fiction why was the body carried to Agra from the original place of burial within six months of the death? What was the hurry?

Another interesting fact is that even in the precincts of the Taj the body was again interred in a temporary grave for another six months Thereafter it was laid where it is supposed to lie now These are very important facts which need to be carefully examined Had the Taj been really built by Shahjahan over a period of 10 to 22 years employing 20 000 labourers one can imagine the heaps of building material lying all around with the large labour force wandering all over In such circumstances would it be possible to keep the body of a dead queen right there to be trodden over by an army of humble labourers in the dust and din of a huge project?

In our view the rational explanation is that soon after Mumtaz s death she was buried in Burhanpur —the town in which she died Six months later when Shahjahan visualized the possibility of ousting Jaisingh from his resplendent hereditary palace using the death of his wife as a lever he kept exerting his royal pressure in talking or browbeating Jaisingh out

[78] In the preceding footnote we have shown how Mulla Abdul Hamid claims that Mumtaz was in her fortieth year (and not the thirty-seventh) when she died.

of his luxurious ancestral home. Since Jaisingh could not be so easily prevailed upon, Shahjahan had the body of Mumtaz brought from Burhanpur to serve as a sort of an ultimatum. When the body itself was there as an handy asset for the emperor and the entire Muslim nobility to browbeat Jaisingh with, could he hold out any longer? He had to surrender his ancestral palace.

Within a few months its central octagonal throne chamber was dug up. Two trenches were made in the basement, and Mumtaz's exhumed body was interred in one. Above the basement in the throne chamber two cenotaphs were raised so as to be directly above the graves in the basement. The other trench in the basement was for Shahjahan. The cenotaph above his trench could have been completed even with that of Mumtaz because, after Shahjahan's death, he could easily be buried in the open trench in the basement without disturbing the cenotaph above. This was necessary to ensure a grand burial for himself alongside Mumtaz when he knew that none of his sons cared for him. The cenotaphs had to be erected in the throne-chamber above the basement lest, while the royal bodies lay underneath, others use the main upper chamber for temporal purposes thereby violating their sanctity.

Niccolao Manucci, a Venetian, in his account of Shahjahan's court, to which he was a witness, says,[79] "There cannot be the least doubt that if the Portuguese had reached the court in the lifetime of Taj Mahal (i.e. Mumtaz Mahal) she would have ordered the whole of them to be cut into pieces after great

[79] Pp. 176-177, *Storia do Mogor* or Mogul India 1653-1708 by Niccolao Manucci

tortures All the same they did not escape a sufficient amount of suffering, some abjured their faith either from fear of torture and of death or through the desire of recovering their wives who had been distributed by Shahjahan among his officers Others, the most beautiful among them, were kept for the royal palace"

Thus neither by lineage, nor by any endearing qualities physical beauty, special attachment and precedence of rank (because she was not the first wife nor a queen in her own right) did Arjumand Banu Begum qualify for the distinction of a unique sepulchre

Both Shahjahan and Mumtaz were, thus extremely harsh and wicked, and not the tender Romeo and Juliet type of pair that the misled public is made to believe

CHAPTER XIX

THE ANCIENT HINDU TAJ PALACE IS INTACT

THOSE NOT able to get rid of the traditional notion of Shahjahan's sponsorship of the Taj Mahal are prone to argue even after reading the foregoing evidence, that Shahjahan may have taken over a ready Hindu palace but he completely demolished it and erected a tomb This is not true The Taj Mahal as we see it today is the ancient Hindu palace except for four superficial changes made in it by Shahjahan The first alteration he made was to dig the basement central chamber floor and after burying Mumtaz, raise a grave mound The other alteration was in the central ground floor chamber Here a cenotaph hump was put up by Shahjahan so that the Hindus may not reclaim the building and no one may be tempted to use the central chamber for residential purposes with Mumtaz's grave in the basement Later after Shahjahan's death Aurangzeb raised another grave in the basement dug up by Shahjahan and another cenotaph in the central Hindu throne room above The third alteration made by Shahjahan was to get Koranic extracts engraved on the walls of the Hindu palace The fourth change he made was to have many staircases and chambers in the basement and upper floors sealed with sand brick and lime

From the above the reader may have noted that Shahjahan did not make any structural change or

alteration in the Taj Mahal Therefore the reader and the visitor to the Taj Mahal should view it as nothing more nor less than an ancient Hindu palace By mistaking it to be a Muslim tomb visitors and readers tend to concentrate their attention on the grave mounds and cenotaphs thereby failing to appreciate the building in all its vastness majesty and grandeur as a palace

The Taj Mahal when viewed as a palace, merits attention in the following manner — 1 Its focal octagonal marble edifice. This has at least four stories. In the basement is a central chamber surrounded by eight chambers The central chamber now has two graves The ground floor central chamber which used to house the ancient Hindu Peacock Throne usurped by Shahjahan now has two cenotaphs Visitors in their haste forget to get round the 12 chambers which surround the central (cenotaph) chamber Thus in the marble structure itself there should be 13 rooms in the basement, 13 on the ground floor and perhaps only 12 in the upper storey (i e the first floor) since the dome rises high above the central chamber. Thus there should be in all 38 rooms in the three stories of the marble palace This is a grand palace suite and not a one room tomb as many visitors imagine it to be in their hurry

2 The second significant feature of the Taj Mahal is the two buildings to its right and left flanks One of them is now mistaken to be a mosque and the other is explained away as a superfluous counterpart. These two were pavilions for the guards and for receiving guests

3 Around the marble edifice is a huge redstone paved courtyard Under it is a huge basement con-

taining scores of rooms The public should ask the Archaeology Department to have the basement unsealed and thrown open to the public It is likely that the rooms filled up with earth and sand may contain some treasure as well as images and other tell tale clues to the building's Hindu origin If a small fee is levied on visitors, the collection will easily pay for the maintenance of the cleared basement

4 At the four corners of the plinth of the marble palace are four towers which, when lighted up at night, used to set off the palace in an enchanting frame An inner spiral staircase leads up to the top of each of the four towers Visitors to the Taj Mahal often vehemently assert that the four marble towers at the plinth corners are definitely an Islamic concept. We wish to tell them that far from being Islamic those towers themselves are an important Hindu characteristic In support we quote a footnote on page 152 of Keene's *Handbook* It says Cunningham writes regarding this mausoleum (i e Humayun tomb) that in this tomb we first see towers attached to the four angles of the main building They form an important innovation in the Muhammedan architecture of Northern India, which was gradually improved and developed, until it culminated in the graceful minars of the Taj Mahal"

The above passage clearly says that the four pillars attached to the corners of the Humayun tomb, and placed at the plinth corners of the Taj Mahal, are un-Islamic innovations In other words they are of Hindu origin This finds corroboration in the Hindu practice of raising four banana stumps as towers at the Satya Narayana Puja altar, and raising towers at the four corners of the wedding altar

The footnote also highlights the flaw in the thinking of Western scholars like Keene and Cunningham, Percy Brown and Fergusson While discussing the individual traits of the so-called mosques and tombs they concede that they are all un Islamic, Hindu traits And yet they blindly believe that the whole building is of Muslim origin Visitors to the Taj Mahal (in Agra) and Bibi ka Makabara (in Aurangabad) and the Gol Gumbaz (in Bijapur) must realize that they are all misappropriated Hindu buildings and must therefore, jettison the tutored and wrongly implanted notion that the four corner towers are an Islamic speciality On the other hand it is a Hindu speciality In Pilani (a town in Rajasthan) the plinth of every public well has towers at its four corners Archaeological officials teachers and professors of history, visitors to monuments and official guides thus seem to be ignorant of the implication of Cunningham's observation, though they consider him an 'authority'

5 Enclosing the marble edifice and the garden in front is a redstone wall As one faces the Taj Mahal on the left hand side in the redstone wall is a multi storeyed well with apartments on every storey A channel from the Yumuna river at the rear used to replenish this well The well used to house the palace treasury within its rooms This arrangement came handy for jettisoning the treasure in the well if the enemy surprised the occupants In normal times the treasure used to remain secure in the well from robbers or intruders who could not easily run away with the treasure from the narrow confines of the well spiral Close to the well is the subterranean passage leading from the Taj Mahal to the Agra fort. Such an un

derground passage is never needed for a tomb but always for a palace

6 Along the redstone wall on the farther side opposite the marble edifice are long arched corridors.

7 As we face the marble Taj Mahal from the farther side main entrance to the garden on the right hand side outside the redstone wall is a huge quadrangle of rooms.

8 Outside the garden is a huge quadrangle with many arched corridors and scores of rooms This huge quadrangle used to be the reception area for royal guests arriving with huge retinues and military contingents. *It is in this quadrangle that the cavalry* and infantry escort accompanying courtiers princes and rulers used to line up to make way for the important personage to alight from his mount and enter the towering garden entrance to proceed to the marble *Taj palace*

9 Outside the redstone wall are many annexes for aides secretaries princes and the ruler's near relations

10 Behind the marble Taj is a huge redstone tower containing scores of rooms in its many storeys Sewer water now-a-days swirls in eddies around this tower which is likely to damage its foundations in the long run.

11 In the *redstone quadrangle outside* the garden are hundreds of rooms and stables for infantrymen and their attendants

12. Around this palace complex are well built rows for shop stalls which Tavernier has described as the *Tasimacan*

THE TAJ MAHAL HAS PALACE DIMENSIONS

THE TAJ Mahal has palace dimensions and attributes Its numerous gateways have spiked doors The entire building complex encloses three to four hundred rooms, a multistoreyed well and pleasure pavilions

One of the photographs in this book shows the approach to the Taj Mahal This majestic approach, flanked by arched redstone corridors, to the Taj Mahal is typical of all Rajput, Hindu royal buildings. Many such arched corridors surround the Taj Mahal garden and the outer quadrangle Between them they enclose hundreds of rooms used for housing the palace staff and also animals Muslim myths explain them away as *Jilo-Khana* or pleasure houses with the built-in absurdity that a monarch as cruel and overbearing as Shahjahan would ever condescend to erect luxury rooms for all and sundry to make merry over the tomb at which Shahjahan himself (we are told) wept bitterly day in and-day-out from 1630 to 1666 Such a majestic approach may still be seen outside all ancient Hindu palaces and townships in Rajasthan.

Behind the palace was a well built and paved river bank known as "ghat" A part of it still exists. Gateways of the Taj Mahal (now barred) opening at the rear provided for the Hindu royalty to bathe at the river and go boating.

Among the many buildings in the Taj Mahal com

plex is the *Nakkar Khana* (Drum House) a photograph of which can be seen in the photograph section. Besides being entirely in the Rajput style as at Chittor Gwalior or Amer the Drum House is further proof of the author's thesis Any kind of music is strictly forbidden in Islamic religious places Even otherwise no drum house is ever planned to disturb the grave-yard repose of departed souls But in Hindu palaces *drum houses are an indispensable appurtenance* Drums and shehnai music used to usher in the dawn announce royal arrivals and departures, welcome guests proclaim festivals and rally the citizenry for royal proclamations

We have already quoted the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to say[40] that Outside the enclosure at the south are ancillary buildings such as stables out houses and guard quarters

Tavernier has also said[41] 'The Tasimacan (Taj i Macan i e a crown mansion) is a large bazar consisting of six large courts all surrounded with porticos under which there are chambers for the use of merchants."

On top of all those buildings are huge terraces and galleries If visitors to the Taj Mahal realise that it is a palace they would no longer be content with having a hurried peep at the cenotaphs and graves They would then rightly want to amble along the corridors over the terraces and inside the labyrinthine basement. Government archaeological officials history teachers, students and lay visitors need to be properly instructed to view and study the Taj Mahal as a

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40 P 758 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ibid Vol. 21
41 Pp. 109-111 *Travels in India*, ibid., Vol. I

Hindu palace, only then will they be able to appreciate its real beauty and grandeur

The locale of the Taj known as Jaisinghpura and Khawaspura encompassed numerous buildings. The area around the Taj teemed with multi storey buildings providing living accommodation for guards, army detachments, stewards waiters, caterers, ushers and other paraphernalia which waits on royalty There were, therefore, in that area a bazar, serais guest houses, and roads connecting all these.

The dimensions of the Taj and its accoutrements are those of a wealthy palace and not of a sombre tomb In support of this we quote here at some length, extracts from Maulvi Moinuddin's book

' In front of the magnificent gate there is a spacious platform, 211½ ft in length and 86¼ ft. in width The plot encompassed by the four walls is a rectangle 1,860 ft. long north and south, and 1000 ft. broad east and west, with a total area of 2,07,000 sq yds. or a little more than 42 acres The gate is 100 ft. high

"The entrance is 10½ ft. wide The gate is made of an alloy composed of eight different metals and is studded with brass nails hammered in. The area inside is an irregular octagon with a diagonal 41½ ft."

Here we want to point out that the octagonal shape is a specifically traditional Hindu shape The octagonal design is often drawn in stone powder in front of entrances to Hindu homes Hand fans in ancient times used to be of octagonal shape Paper lamps hung during the Diwali festival are of an octagonal shape

Special metal alloys were known to and manufactured only by Hindu smiths as is evident from the

famous iron pillar in Delhi the shaft lying in Dhar and a number of other instances

A tomb is open to fakirs and the poor all the 24 hours and therefore needs no doors studded with nails. Only a palace or fort door has polished brass nails hammered in for strengthening the entrance against possible intrusion.

The Maulvi further says

"A flight of 17 steps takes one to the second storey Going up 17 steps higher we reach the 3rd storey containing four apartments The apartments communicate with one another by a gallery running through At the corners of this storey there are octagonal rooms each with four doorways and one entrance to the staircase going up

Of the four staircases two go down to the first floor the other two are closed (halfway through)

Rooms at the southwestern corner have a through passage while in the northeastern rooms the stairs are interrupted midway A gallery affords communication between the d fferent rooms each passage has a branch leading to the staircase

• A flight of stairs consisting of 34 steps brings us to the very top Here there are four towers at the corners each containing eight doorways The towers are crowned with cupolas topped with brass kalases

The last word kalases above should be noted This word is repeated many times in Maulvi Moinud din s description of the Taj The word is from Sanskrit. It could never get into Taj premises especially in a Muslim narrative of the Taj unless it has been hovering in the Taj by pre Muslim Rajput tradition 'Kalas signifies a shining pinnacle usually of brass or gold The repeated use of the word • kalas also

proves that the monument is a pre-Muslim palace. The word "kalas" only occurs in connection with towering and magnificent temples, palaces and such other monuments.

It must also be noted that the four cupolas nestling around the dome are of pure Rajput shape. Those capping the four towers at the corners of the Taj Mahal's open verandah are also of an entirely Rajput design.

What about the dome, it may be asked? The presumption that the dome is a Muslim invention is baseless. To call the dome a Muslim creation amounts to linking it somehow with Prophet Mohammad's birth. What possible connection could there be between the dome as an architectural design, and the origin of Islam?

In the case of the Taj Mahal we have already quoted Emperor Babur, Shahjahan's court chronicle—the *Badshahnama*—and the great English architect Havell to prove that the dome is a Hindu constructional form.

The Kaba, the current central shrine of Islam, itself is not capped with a dome.

The Hindus alone have special names for eight directions namely the North, South, East, West and the other four in between them designated by the Sanskrit names—*Eeshanya, Agneya, Nairitya* and *Wayavya*—to indicate which Hindu palaces and temples like the Taj Mahal are octagonal.

Referring to some 14 basement rooms behind the royal graves, Maulvi Moinuddin says[83] in his book, "The last two rooms have apertures peeping on to the

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[83] P. 37, *The Taj and its Environments* ibid.

placid stream It was these openings that brought to light the existence of the long hidden chambers. The mouths of the staircases were shut up with stone slabs. It is hard to find out why these underground chambers were built ."

That even a Muslim like the Maulvi is hard put to explain why the underground chambers exist in a sepulchre shows how the whole Taj legend is made up of incongruent bits. In a palace any number of underground chambers are not only of immense use but are indispensable Such chambers in a palace are used to keep treasure, hide friends, imprison enemies, and for secret talks. In a tomb basement, chambers are redundant.

The very fact that those chambers have been filled up with sand and rendered unoccupiable is further proof that once the monument was converted into a tomb, Shahjahan did not want visitors or caretakers to use the premises for residential purposes. Superfluous rooms of the erstwhile palace had therefore to be filled up

On the same page the author Maulvi Moinuddin further observes, "From the existence of the sand, apparently of the Jumna, lying thickly on the floor it might be reasonably supposed that there was a ghat or landing place on the spot, which however was disused subsequently for some unknown reason The real object of building them remains then a mystery"

Many such features are bound to be a "mystery" to those who study the Taj Mahal in the mistaken belief that it originated as a tomb The entire mystery clears up into a remarkably coherent mass of meticulous detail the moment it is realised that the Taj Mahal originated as a Rajput palace perhaps

several centuries before Shahjahan took it into his head to convert it into a tomb

On page 38 the Maulvi says "To the west of these chambers is a *mosque which has room for a congregation of 539 souls* We wonder what significance if any attaches to the figure 539 This again shows that the guard room flanking the throne chamber of the palace is today pointed out as a mosque Had it been *a mosque it would have provided accommodation for* a round figure of persons like 1000 or 10000 not the odd random figure 539

The four marble towers at the four corners of the open verandah of the Taj Mahal were both the watch *towers of the Hindu palace as well as lamp towers* At night the brightly illuminated palace used to appear framed in those four towers bearing their lights high up in the dark sky

Blind adherents of the Indo-Saracenic theory of ar*chitecture seem to be unaware that towers starting at* ground or plinth level like chimneys of brick kilns, are a speciality of indigenous ancient Indian architecture Saracenic minarets begin from the shoulders of buildings as they do in mosques. And usually such minarets are not hollow from within and have no stairs This is one of the grounds among other voluminous evidence which disproves traditional Muslim claims to the so-called Kutub Minar and the four towers of the Taj Mahal

Marking every plinth connected with service to God the king or the public with four towers is a universal ancient Indian custom The square altar on which the deity is installed for Satyanarayan worship has four banana plant stumps raised at the four corners The wedding altar has piles of earthen pitchers form

ing tapering pillars at the four corners. Just about 125 miles by motorable road from Delhi is Pilani, a town in Rajasthan. There every public well has a large square or rectangular plinth around it. At the four corners of the plinth are invariably found pillars. This should be enough proof that public wells palaces and altars used to be set off with four pillars marking the four corners of their area. The same practice followed in the Taj Mahal is yet another proof of its Rajput origin dating from pre Muslim times.

That erecting towers at four corners of a building is not a Muslim custom is clear from a footnote on page 162 of *Keene's Handbook*. He says therein "Cunningham writes regarding this (Humayun's) mausoleum (that) in this tomb we first see towers attached to the four angles of the main building. They form an important innovation in the Muhammedan architecture of northern India which was gradually improved and developed until it culminated in the graceful minars of the Taj Mahal."

The above passage is typical of the naivete of British scholars. Far from realising that Humayun's tomb is an erstwhile Hindu palace in which the second generation Moghul emperor Humayun has been buried they start with the assumption that the massive building was erected to mark his burial spot. Then they note its four towers and characterize them as innovations in Muhammedan architecture (?) And then they imagine that these towers were evolved (and perhaps also moved away a little bit from the main building after the death of each successive Moghul emperor) and moved away to the four corners of plinth by the time Mumtaz—one of the 5000 harem women of

Shahjahan died If that was so where are the missing links?

After pointing out the absurdity of the assumption of British scholars misled by the bluffs of Muslim chronicles we would like to draw the readers attention to the grain of truth in Cunningham's observation

Cunningham is absolutely right in noting that towers at four corners of buildings is a non Muslim trait. If they are found at the four corners of the so-called Humayun tomb in Delhi and at the plinth corners of the so-called Taj Mahal in Agra that is because both are commandeered Hindu palaces put to Muslim use

While the building on one flank of the Taj is called a mosque that on the opposite side is justified as a useless, inexplicable symmetrical adjunct termed by the non-descript word 'Jawab" meaning 'reply" Thus hard put to explain away the various parts of the Taj fantastic explanations have been piled one over the other without any consideration to their mutual consistency or balance with the result that at the least prodding its several links fall apart.

Continuing his survey of the Taj precincts Maulvi Moinuddin Ahmad says[88] in his book "Adjacent to the back wall of the mosque is the Basai tower" He is at a loss to explain its significance or purpose The word Basai derives from a Sanskrit root signifying residence There are many ancient towns in India called Basai When the Taj Mahal is known to have originated as a Rajput palace several centuries before

88 P 39 ibid. Perhaps he means the multistoreyed red stone tower on the opposite side near the Jawab alias Jamaat Khana

Shahjahan, the Basai tower is easily explained as a palace adjunct

Moinuddin states on page 50 of his book that "according to the *Badshahnama* the enclosure (in which the two cenotaphs are located) was completed in 10 years at a cost of Rs. 50,000 It had a door of Jasper, costing Rs. 10,000"

Obviously a tomb usually frequented by faqirs and mendicants does not need to have a jasper door Such rich and expensive doors are meant for living monarchs, not for dead bodies

About other buildings in the precincts Maulvi Moinuddin's book says on page 64, "The place between the chief gate of the mausoleum and the grand portal was known as Jilo Khana. . . . A great portion of the splendid buildings that formed once a valuable appendage to the Taj, has fallen down . . The area enclosed within the four walls of the Jilo Khana was occupied by 128 rooms of which only 76 remain Near the garden wall there are two Khawaspuras (or enclosed compounds) each containing 32 rooms with as many vestibules for the attendants (At present the Western 'Pura' is filled with flower pots Half of the other 'Pura' is occupied by a cowstable)" The cowshed continuing to our own day in the Taj Mahal precincts is another clear indication of its Hindu origin.

This statement needs to be carefully examined It gives a very clear indication that the Taj precincts consisted of numerous buildings, three or four stories high, consisting of hundreds of rooms Accommodation on such a grand scale encompassnig several hundred rooms is never part of a tomb but is always a necessity when the central building is a palace

The suffix "pura" is a definite hangover of the times when the Rajputs occupied the Taj Mahal because "pura" in Sanskrit signifies a busy locality, not the weird silence of a graveyard

Even the syllable "Khawas" forming part of the word "Khawaspura" has a Rajput significance, since "Khawas" were dependents of Rajput rulers The very fact that the annexes of the Taj form part of Khawaspura proves that while the Rajput ruler lived in the centrally situated Taj Mahal his dependents lived in the annexes

Even the central basement chamber of the Taj Mahal was magnificently embellished as it should be in an expensive palace But since the palace was commandeered for conversion into a Muslim tomb its basement had been barred under Muslim rule to non Muslims obviously because the secret of its non Muslim origin should not leak out Francis Bernier, a visitor to Shahjahan's court was refused entry on the pretext that being a non-Muslim his entry may defile the place Bernier testifies to our observation. He says [84] "Under the dome is a small chamber, wherein is enclosed the tomb of Taje-Mahil It is opened with much ceremony once in a year and once only; and no Christian is admitted within lest its sanctity should be profaned I have not seen the interior, but I understand that nothing can be conceived more rich and magnificent" Bernier also tells us that Shahjahan was not affluent in spite of his stingy nature. Bernier notes [85] "Shahjahan was a great economist .

[84] P 339 *Travels in the Mogul Empire* by Francis Bernier Translated by Irving Brock, in two volumes. William Pickering Chancery Lane London 1826

[85] P 251 ibid

who never amassed (more than) six crore rupees.

Wild tales of the fabulous riches of the Moghuls are all hearsay The Moghuls no doubt collected huge spoils by frequently looting the Indian masses openly, or by fleecing them through trumped up usurious taxes and ransoms. Yet they could hardly retain their wealth for any length of time It got drained off as soon as it was amassed since a vicious corrupt and treacherous nobility had to be constantly kept in good humour and in leash by keeping their palms greased with the unction of liberally doled out wealth The Muslim courts thus sustained themselves on a plunder and squander basis leaving the monarch always hard pressed for cash.

It is therefore unhistorical to suggest that Shah Jahan who had to conduct 48 major campaigns in his less than 30-year reign and face famines built the fabulous Taj Mahal Old Delhi township the Jama Masjid and the magnificent fort in Delhi—and all exclusively in the Hindu style Then a question arises that if Shahjahan founded Old Delhi and the Fatehpuri mosque is located at a focal point in it where was the need to build the Jama Masjid? Many such logical questions have not been considered in compiling Indian historical accounts from concocted and forged records of Muslim rule in India.

Sir H M Elliot gives some graphic instances of such concoctions and forgeries in the preface to his eight volume work. Keene found the *Tarikh i Taj Mahal* document a forgery Similarly the Punjab Regional History Congress at its 1966 session found the Malerkotla Nawab s letter to the then Moghul emperor interceding on behalf of Guru Govind Singh's two sons a forgery

The *Guide to the Taj at Agra* states,[66] "There are said to have been two silver doors at the entrance to the Taj . ."

On page 21, *Maulvi Moinuddin's book* mentions that "The solid gold rail around the tomb (afterwards replaced by a network of marble) was already completed by 1632, and Shahjahan had founded a suburb to provide a revenue for the upkeep of the mausoleum and had caused hills to be made level because they might not hinder the prospect of it . . . *These* details are of special interest, as we have no other account of the Taj by an English traveller at this date"

Incidentally, the "hills" referred to above were put up for defence of the Taj Palace by its Rajput builders *Some of these "hills" still exist near the Taj* approach.

The hills were meant to prevent mangonels and catapults being hauled near enough to be able to hurl rocks on the Hindu edifice

Besides these defensive hillocks, the Taj palace has another defensive accoutrement, that is a moat While the Yamuna river itself serves as a moat at the rear, a dry moat may still be noticed on the right side of the Taj Mahal (as one stands facing it), outside the redstone wall

These defence structures also prove that the Taj Mahal originated as a palace and not as a tomb

A critical study of the above passages is revealing One talks of silver doors and the other of a gold railing enclosing the area where the tombs are situated Had these fixtures been installed by Shahjahan, there

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[66] P 14, *Guide to the Taj at Agra*, ibid

is no reason or record as to why and by whom they were removed

Keene notes on pages 163 of his *Handbook* "There were originally, it is said two silver gates which cost Rs. 1,27 000" Obviously when Shahjahan took over the Hindu mansion to be turned into a Muslim tomb he removed those gates to his treasury to be melted away

Silver doors and gold railings are fixtures of palaces, not of tombs To believe that Shahjahan allowed these fixtures to be installed in the graveyard of his wife while he had nothing approaching them in his own palace is absurd in the extreme It also shows crass ignorance on the part of the believers of Shahjahan's stingy, selfish cruel, haughty and proud nature

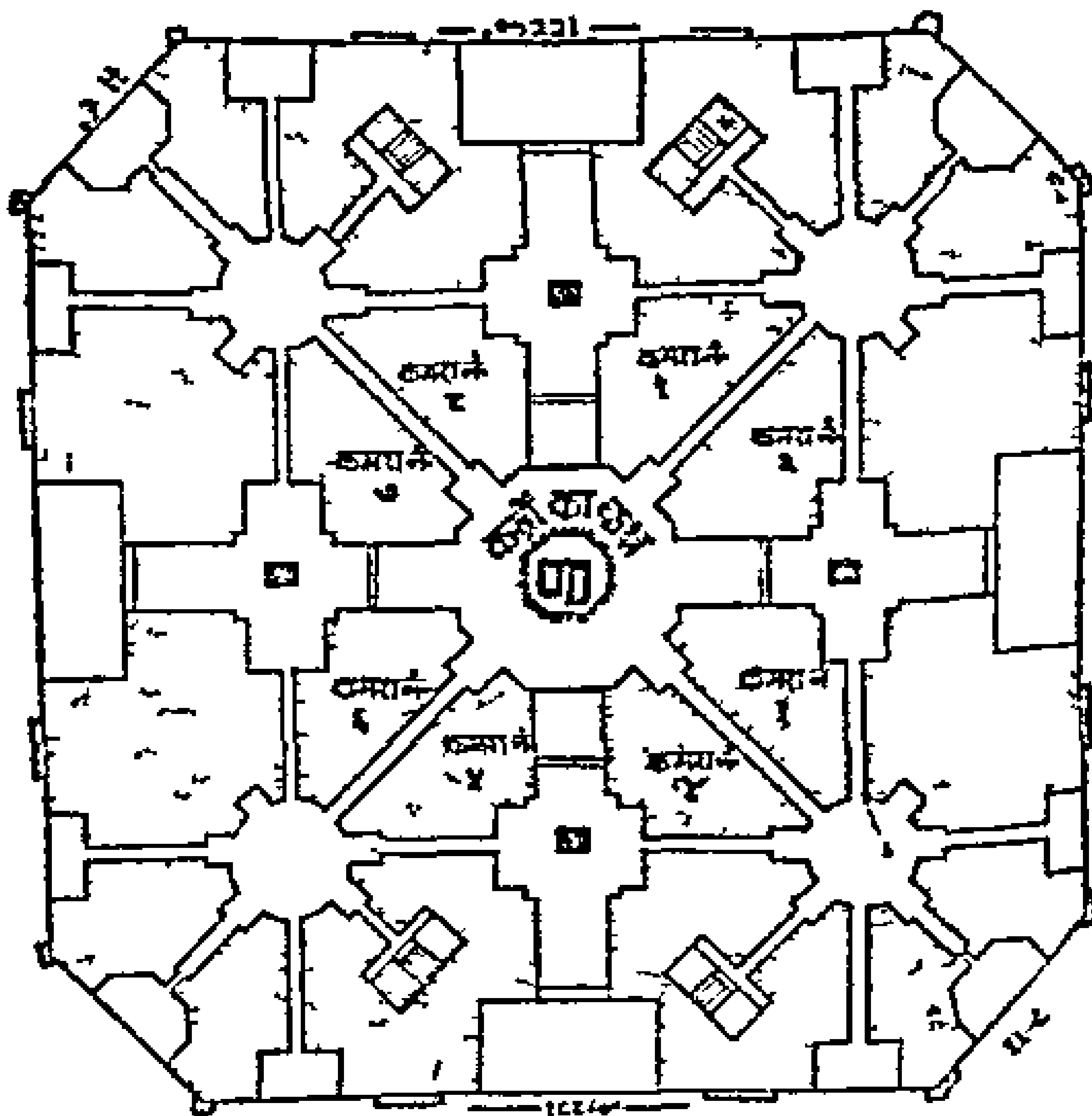
How could solid gold railings be placed around the tomb by 1630 if Mumtaz had died in 1630 or 1631? How many years would it take to acquire a site, decide upon a design for the proposed tomb, if any, get the design made get the foundation dug order the building material, erect the building order a gold railing get it fixed and make security arrangements so that the gold may not be stolen? Could all this be done in a year or two?

Here is emphatic incontrovertible, visible proof that far from being the product of the mythical Indo-Saracenic architecture the Taj Mahal has been built according to the Hindu *Shilpa Shastra.*

Below is the ground plan[17] of the Taj Mahal while on page 4 of the photographs section is the ground

[17] Ground plan of the Taj Mahal as drawn by the late well known British architect E. B Havell.

plan[19] of a typical ancient Hindu temple Note the symmetrical arrangement vertically as well as horizontally and the frame within frame construction with the deity or the king's apartment located in the centre. In the Hindu Taj palace the Hindu King's Pea



Ground plan of palace drawn by E. B Havell

[19] Ground plan of a Hindu temple, facing p 8 in Vol. III *Storia do Mogor* ibid

cock Throne room is in the centre while in the plan of the temple the deity's sanctum sanctorum too is in the centre

The third characteristic is that the approach facades on all the four sides are identical And so-called tombs have such facials because they are erstwhile Hindu palaces or temples

This identity of architectural design of the Taj Mahal with that of a Hindu temple, coupled with the great British architect Havell s observation, quoted earlier, that the Taj Mahal is a Hindu construction should leave no doubt in the reader's mind that the Taj Mahal is an ancient Hindu palace built to Hindu specifications *Badshahnama* also admits that it was a domed palace

The front garden area is almost double that of the near marble Taj Palace built up area This is what Vincent Smith describes (on page 9 of this book, *Akbar the Great Mogul*) as the garden palace, in which the first Moghul emperor Babur died in 1530, i e a century before Shahjahan's wife (Mumtaz) died

The same palace is described by Babur himself in his *Memoirs* as the one "adorned with a peristyle of pillars and having a dome in the centre" (See next page.)

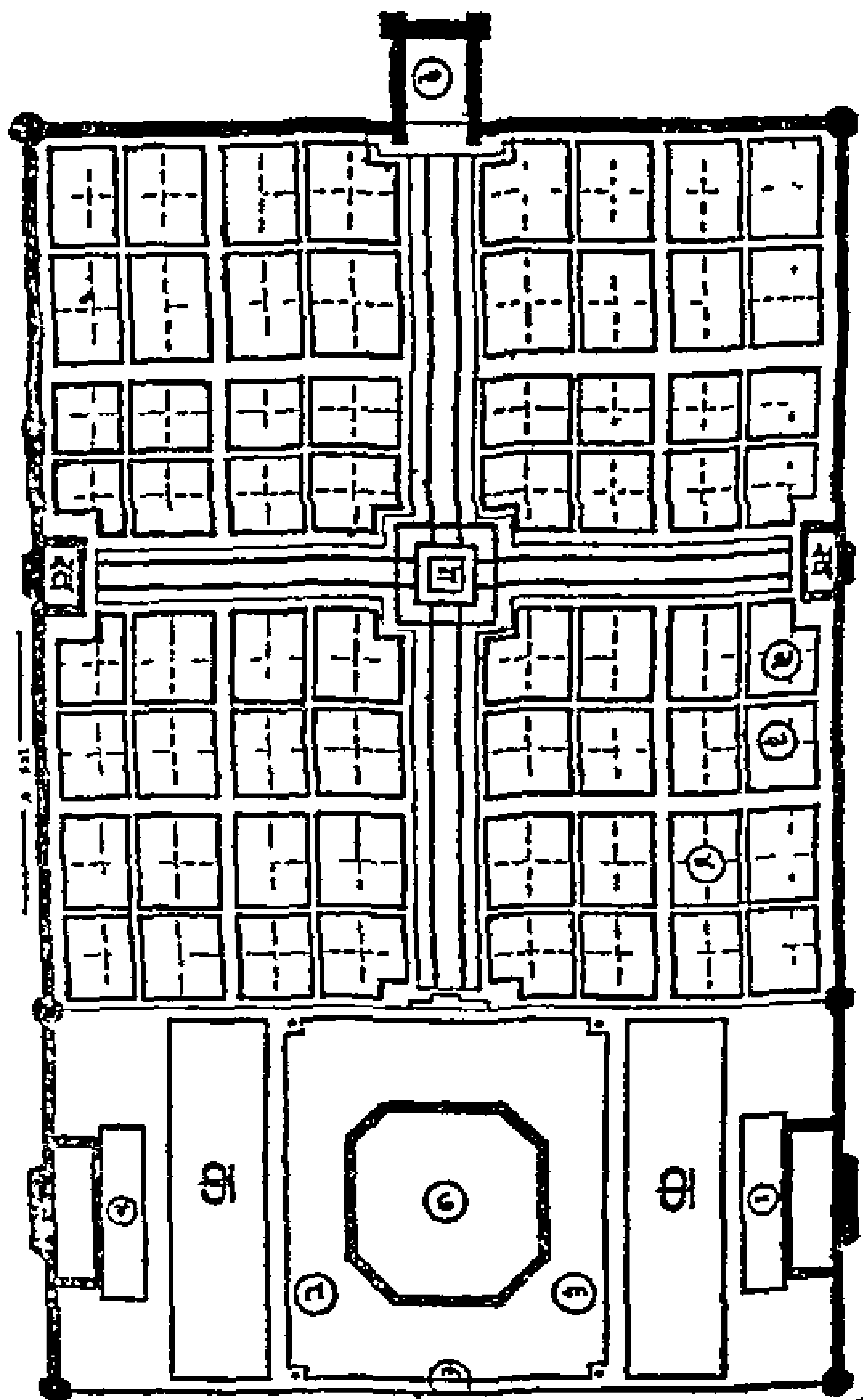


Diagram of the Taj Mahal and its garden.

THE INSCRIPTIONS

WHAT GREATER proof could there be of the falsity of the Shahjahan legend than that in none of the numerous inscriptions in the Taj Mahal is there any claim made of Shahjahan having commissioned it.

Besides the 14 chapters of the Koran inscribed in the Taj Mahal there are some non religious engravings which do not contain even the remotest allusion to Shahjahan's authorship of the Taj Mahal Had Shahjahan really ordered the Taj Mahal would he not in the prolific etchings made all over the walls have recorded the whole history of the fancied tomb from its conception to its completion? Would he not have left behind for the world a clear record of his great and fabulous achievement in marble and redstone if that were a fact?

The inscriptions in the Taj Mahal are reproduced on pages 170-174 of *Keene's Handbook for Visitors to Agra* Keene says "The walls and roof (of the Cenotaph Chamber) are profusely decorated and inscribed with tenets from the Koran encircling the archways and the spaces between them ending with (the words) 'Written by the insignificant being Amanat Khan Shirazi in the year 1048 Hijri and the 12th of His Majesty's reign'." (1639 A D)

So the much boosted Amanat Khan Shirazi vaunted as one of the great wonder craftsmen who built the Taj Mahal turns out to be no more than an 'insignificant' engraver such as is found in every shop selling

kitchen utensils or stone slabs or crying about the streets

The cenotaph of Shahjahan s wife Mumtaz, for whom the Taj Mahal is supposed to have been ordered by Shahjahan also gives not even an inkling of the project in the inscription recorded on it. Keene notes ' The Cenotaph (of Mumtaz) is decorated in Persian with texts from the Koran 99 names of God and the simple epitaph 'The illustrious sepulchre of Arju mand Banoo Begum called Mumtaz Mahal died in 1040 A H' (1629 A.D) '

Had Shahjahan ordered a fabulous tomb to be erected for his wife the inscription on her cenotaph would have and should have contained some mention about it After all mediaeval history has all along claimed that Muslim rulers in India used to vie with one another in building fabulous tombs for themselves or their near and dear ones This claim is of course most preposterous and goes against the very grain of normal human behaviour Even then taking the long line of erring historians at their word let us ask them whether those who were so keen on leaving behind wonder tombs would not vaunt their authorship of those tombs in inscriptions ordered by them on the tombs?

One other important point which emerges from the above inscription is that the date of Mumtaz s death is mentioned as 1629 A D Earlier we have noted how other historians variously claim Mumtaz to have died in 1630 or 1631 A D That means that nobody seems to know when Mumtaz died All we get to know from the various accounts is that Mumtaz died at some time between 1629 1631 A three year speculative range for the death of a woman believed to have been the

apple of the eye of emperor Shahjahan and for whom, as the world is nose led to believe, a fanciful mausoleum was ordered to be built forthwith, is absurd People have not been told the whole truth of this sordid affair They have been kept doped and dazed with airy accounts. They do not know that when we come to brass tacks the whole Shahjahan legend fizzles out as a monstrous concoction. She being one among 5,000 women of Shahjahan's harem her death was of no consequence, hence the failure to record the date of her death

Exactly underneath Mumtaz s cenotaph, in the basement chamber, is (what is believed to be) her original grave. Keene says "Mumtaz Mahal s epitaph is similar to that on her cenotaph" That is to say the inscriptions on Mumtaz's so-called grave and the cenotaph are almost identical

If Shahjahan is claimed to have been too modest to record his claim to the authorship of the Taj Mahal (though he was the most vainglorious haughty and proud Moghul monarch) at least others should have recorded the fact after his death when ordering inscriptions on his grave and cenotaph But even they dared not do it. How could they when their contemporaries knew that Mumtaz and Shahjahan had been buried in a fabulous Hindu building commandeered from Jaisingh? To us therefore the absence of any claim on Shahjahan s behalf is quite plausible

Shahjahan died in 1666 A D i e after about 36 years after his consort Mumtaz died Keene says "(Shahjahan's cenotaph) is inscribed in Persian with texts from the Koran together with the following epitaph 'The illustrious sepulchre and sacred resting place of His Most Exalted Majesty, dignified as Raz-

wan having his abode in Paradise and his dwelling in the starry heaven inmate of the regions of bl ss the second Sahib Kiran Shahjahan the King valiant. May his shrine ever flourish and may his abode be in Hea ven. He travelled from this transitory world to the world of eternity on the n ght of the 28th of the month of Rajab 1076 A H (1666 A D)

Underneath in the basement, Shahjahan s grave bears a shorter epitaph It says The sacred sepulchre of His Most Exalted Majesty dweller of Paradise the second Sahib Kiran the King Shahjahan May his shrine ever flourish 1076 A H (1666 A D)

On the west of the marble building is another which is being termed as the Mosque ever since Shahjahan commandeered it In its arches too are inscribed Koranic texts Besides says Keene there are several marble discs inscribed with Ya Kaffi (Oh! All Suffi cient One!) and Allah (God)

Thus in none of the several inscriptions quoted by us above, is there even the faintest mention or refer ence of Shahjahan having commissioned the Taj Ma hal Is it ever conceivable that a regime which lit tered the whole building and the cenotaphs and graves with a plethora of random engravings would not vaunt its having built the great mausoleum? The omission, along with the other evidence we have produced here-tofore is clear proof that Shahjahan only comman deered a Hindu mansion for burying his wife and did not build anything All the inscriptions on the Taj Mahal are of the frivolous type such as p cnickers scribble on somebody else s property The very in scriptions therefore indicate that the Taj Mahal is not Shahjahan s property

THE TAJ MAHAL MAY BE A SHIVA TEMPLE

EVEN THOUGH Shahjahan's own chronicle (the *Badshahnama*) admits that the Taj Mahal is a commandeered Hindu palace we have shown in the preceding chapter how its ground plan is identical with that of a Hindu temple. A stone inscription known as the Bateshwar inscription kept in the Lucknow (capital of Uttar Pradesh in India) Museum indicates that the Taj Mahal could be a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva around 1155.

The inscription in Sanskrit has 34 stanzas of which stanzas 25, 26 and 34 being relevant to our topic are reproduced below:

प्रासादो वैष्णवस्तेन निर्मितोन्तर्वहन्हरि मूर्ध्नास्पृशति यो
नित्य पदमस्यैव मध्यमम् ॥२५॥

अकारयच्च स्फटिकावदातमसाविदमन्दिरमिन्दुमौले:
न जातुयस्मिन्निवसन्सदेव कैलासवासाय-
चकार चेत: ॥२६॥

षट्स्वभ्रसमुखादित्य संख्ये विक्रमवत्सरे आश्विन शुक्ल
पञ्चम्या वासरे वासवे शितु. ॥३४॥

Translated, these mean 'He (King Paramardi Dev) raised a palace which had inside it the idol of Lord Vishnu whose feet the King used to touch with his (bowed) head

'Similarly the King also had constructed a temple (dedicated) to the God who bears the crescent on His (fore-) head, made of crystal white stone. Consecrated in that (magnificent) temple the Lord (was so pleased that He) never thought of repairing to His (Himalayan) abode on Mount Kailas

'(This inscription is) dated 1212 Vikram era Ashwin (month) Sunday, 5th day of the bright lunar fortnight'

The inscription quoted above may be found in the book[13] titled *Kharjurwahak alias Wartaman* (modern) *Khajuraho* by D J Kale and on pp 270-274 of *Epigraphia Indica* Vol I

On page 124 of his book Mr Kale states 'The above inscription found at Mauja Bateshwar, near Agra is at present in the Lucknow Museum It is of the King Paramardi Dev, dated Vikram Samvat 1212, Ashwin (month), 5th day of the bright lunar fortnight. It has in all 34 stanzas which describe the origin of the Chandratreya (regal) dynasty and its important rulers. The inscription was found embedded in a mound at Bateshwar It was later deposited in the Lucknow Museum by General Cunningham where it still is The two beautiful marble temples which King Paramardi Dev had raised—one for Lord Vishnu and the other for Lord Shiva—were subsequently desecrated during Muslim invasions Some

[13] Published by S D Kale and M D Kale Price Rs 2.50 Obtainable from Mr M D Kale Advocate Chhattarpur Madhya Pradesh India

clever (farsighted) person had this inscription concerning these temples burned in a mound It remained buried for many years until 1900 A.D when during excavations it was discovered by General Cunningham "

Bateshwar now a part of Agra, is only about four miles away from the Taj Mahal

Mr Kale the author of the book quoted above specifically observes that from the location where the inscription was found it appeared to have been carefully and deliberately dumped by some farsighted person in the wake of destructive Muslim invasions.

Though the learned author Mr Kale prefers to call both the buildings referred to in the inscription as temples we *prefer* to interpret

विष्णो प्रासाद

as the king s palace because (Vishnu does signify a king, and) had the inscription meant it to be a Vishnu temple it need not have again mentioned the fact, as it does that the building sheltered an image of Lord Vishnu Anyway this is only a minor point.

The inscription assumes importance inasmuch as it refers to the raising in Agra of two buildings of crystal *white marble 812 years ago from today* (The two chronological tables of the Chandratreya (alias Chandela) dynasty drawn by General Cunningham are reproduced by Mr Kale on pages 140-141 of his book list Paramardi Dev as belonging to 1165 or 1167)

Incidentally this inscription effectively refutes the bland and blind assertion that it was only the Muslims who first started raising marble buildings in India.

We have already proved in our two books[90] that the Muslim rulers in India did not raise even a single mansion, canal, fort palace, tomb or mosque whether of redstone or marble They only appropriated earlier Hindu buildings and misused them

In our view the two buildings referred to in the Bateshwar inscription still exist in Agra in all their marble splendour They are the so-called Itmad ud-Daulah tomb and the Taj Mahal

What the inscription refers to as the king's palace is the present Itmad ud Daulah tomb The Chandramauleeshwar temple is the Taj Mahal

A common failing of scholars of Indian history has been their naiveté in believing that there could be Muslim tombs and mosques galore in India without corresponding palaces For instance, what is proudly pointed out as the Itmad ud Daulah tomb can have no meaning unless the historians are also able to point out palaces where the august courtier Itmad ud Daulah lived while alive Our explanation is that Itmad ud-Daulah used to live in the very building in which he is believed to have been buried And that building was an appropriated Hindu building. It is obviously the king's palace referred to in the Bateshwar inscription

The Shiva (Chandramauleeshwar) temple is obviously the Taj Mahal for the following reasons —

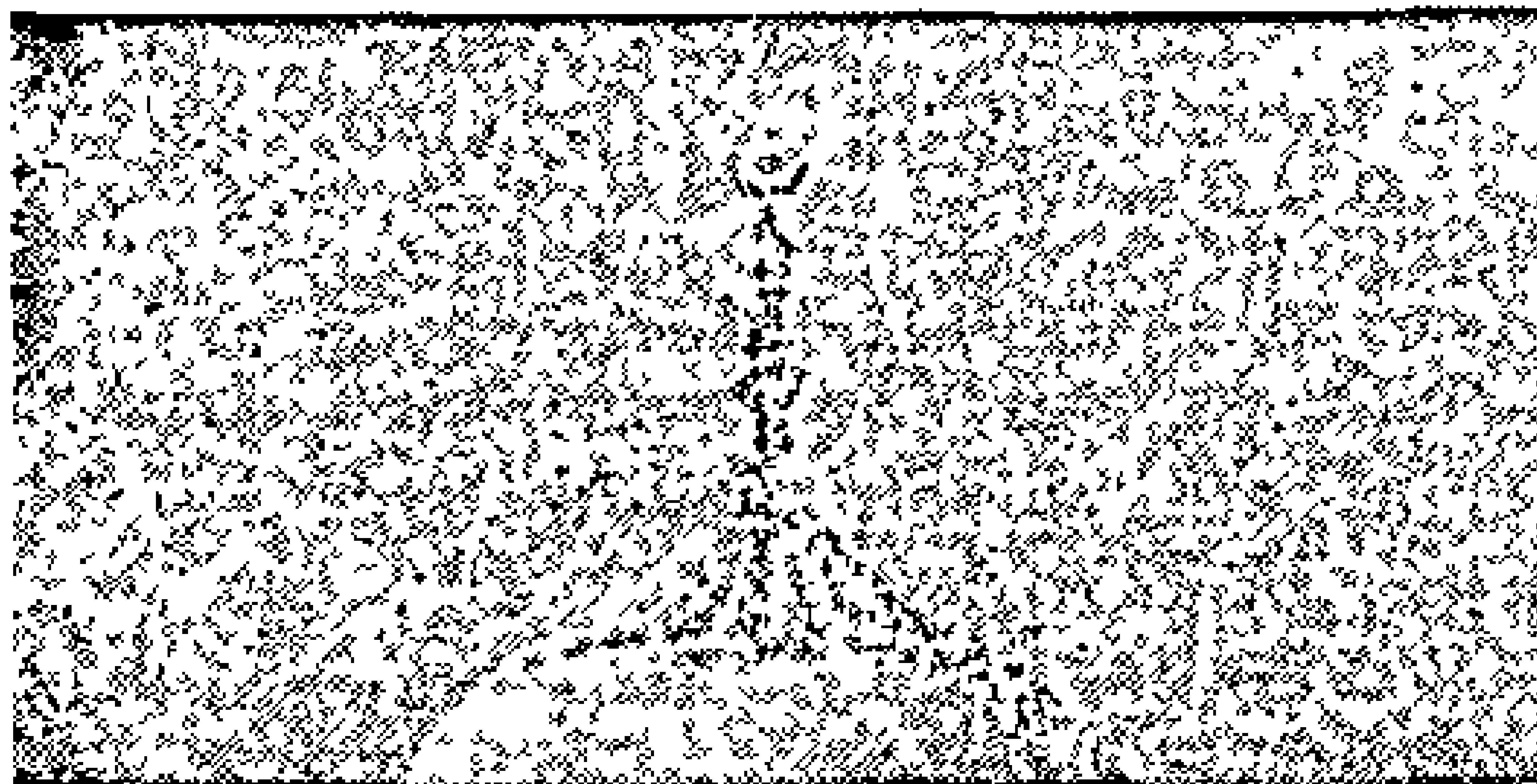
1 It is of crystal white marble as mentioned in the inscription.

2 Its pinnacle bears the trident (*trishul*) which is an exclusive emblem of Chandramauleeshwar

[90](i) *Taj Mahal Was A Rajput Palace* ibid (ii) *Some Blunders of Indian Historical Research* ibid.

3. The edifice is said to have been of such captivating beauty that the Lord (Shiva) Chandramauleeshwar never again thought of returning to his Himalayan abode of Kailas.

4. We have mentioned elsewhere in this book that the Taj Mahal garden included plants and trees all



Trident (*trishul*) at the pinnacle of the Taj Mahal.

sacred to the Hindus. Among them is the Bel and Harshringar the leaves and flowers of which are considered a necessity for the worship of Lord Shiva.

5. *The central chamber of the Taj Mahal which is* now believed to contain the cenotaphs of emperor Shahjahan and his wife Arjumand Banu Begum has around it eight quadrangular chambers providing a perambulatory passage for devotees as is the Hindu custom.

6. As the devotee passes through each of those rooms, ventilators provide him a view of the centre of the octagonal central chamber where the emblem of Lord Chandramauleeshwar must have been consecrated.

7 The high dome of the Taj Mahal central chamber with its reverberation effect provided the proper gimmick to produce the ecstatic din that accompanies the worship of Lord Shiva when He is supposed to perform the cosmic (*Tandava Nritya*) dance amidst the blowing of conches beating of drums and tolling of bells

8 The high dome is also a common feature of Shiva temple to enable the hanging of a pitcher for water to drip over the emblem of Lord Shiva.

9 Silver doors and gold railings mentioned as fixtures of the Taj Mahal are a common feature of Hindu temples surviving even to our own day Had the gold railing, fancied to have been provided for Mumtaz's tomb been subsequently removed one should have seen holes in the mosaic flooring for the props which supported the railing There are no such holes That means that it was Shahjahan who removed the gold railings of the ancient Hindu Shiva temple and carried them away to the treasury, before using the location of the Hindu idol to graft an Islamic tomb

10 Guides at the Taj Mahal still mention a tradition of a drop of rain water dropping from the high dome top on the cenotaph within This obviously is a remnant of the past memories of the water dripping on the emblem of Lord Shiva from the pitcher

11 Tavernier mentions the six courts in the Taj Mahal building complex where a bazar used to be held It is common knowledge that in Hindu tradition bazars and fairs are invariably held around temples which constitute the focal point of Hindu life

12. The trident (*trishul*) which is Lord Shiva's exclusive and typical missile is also inlaid at the apex of

the Taj Mahal's main marble entrance arch at the base of the dome It is in red and white lines exactly as some Hindus wear it in colour on their foreheads Its being installed there at the apex of the main entrance arch clearly proves that it is an unmistakable Shiva temple and that therefore the Taj Mahal must have been a Shiva temple originally

13 A full length design of the entire trident pinnacle as it towers above the dome, has been inscribed in the redstone yard to the right of the Taj Mahal as we stand facing the marble edifice This again proves its Hindu origin since it has been a tradition in Hindu architecture to inscribe the basic scale used in the construction of every building somewhere in the premises In the case of the Taj Mahal the length of its trident pinnacle happens to be the basic scale used in raising this Shiva temple

It is pointed out by some that the gilded pinnacle on the Taj Mahal dome bears the Arabic engraving "Allaho Akbar" meaning 'God is Great." That those words were engraved on the Hindu Trident after Shahjahan commandeered the Hindu temple for Islamic use is apparent from the fact that the replica of the pinnacle inlaid in the red stone courtyard to the right does not bear that inscription

At the back of the marble platform under the red stone terrace, facing the river is a long row of spacious decorated chambers and an adjoining long corridor running along the entire length of that apartment row Those chambers at a level lower than the basement central chamber, which is believed to contain the real graves would not have been decorated had the Taj Mahal been an Islamic tomb

Moreover there is another octagonal chamber a

ly underneath the chamber supposed to contain the real graves All visitors are apparently being misled The corpse of Mumtaz, if at all buried in the Taj Mahal, is neither in the ground floor octagonal chamber nor in the basement chamber

The chamber right under the so-called graves which has been haphazardly sealed with brick and lime is likely to contain Hindu idols and inscriptions Similarly the corridors running along the East and West of the marble plinth under the redstone terrace also seem to have been sealed Likewise the large door size and ventilator type openings in the apartment row, under the redstone terrace facing the river have also been crudely walled up If those ugly fillings are removed the beauty of the underground apartments of the Taj Mahal opened to the cool breeze from the Yamuna river and to sunshine decorated with coloured linear drawings can once again be the delight of the visitor as it used to be in the days before Shahjahan s filibuster Thus it is possible that right up to the river bed level the Taj Mahal has in all four or five underground stories below the marble plinth

14 The Taj Mahal itself is far from Persian It is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit term "Teja Maha Alaya" meaning ' Resplendent Shrine " It was known as the resplendent shrine because it reflects a dazzling sheen in sunlight and moonlight. That name also attaches to it because Lord Shiva's third eye is said to emit a jet of lustre or ' teja ' The traditional conjecture that *the term Taj Mahal derives from the name of Mumtaz* Mahal proves baseless on closer scrutiny In the first place in Shahjahan s official chronicle the name of the lady supposed to be buried inside is spelled Mumtazul Zamani and not Mumtaz Mahal. Secondly, the

important, distinguishing prefix "Mum" could never be dropped off leaving the stump of "Taj Mahal" to designate the building Thirdly, even if one attempts to squeeze some meaning from the term "Taj Mahal" it would connote "a crown residence," which the Taj certainly is not since it is a tomb Fourthly, there is no equivalent term in the entire range of Muslim lore or history Had the term "Taj Mahal" been common it should have been heard of in connection with Muslim tombs or palaces in other parts of the world

15 The Bateshwar inscription enables us, at least tentatively, to trace the 813 year history of the Taj Mahal to our own day It appears that the Taj Mahal alias Teja Maha Alaya originated as a Shiva temple in 1155 The deity, Lord Shiva was consecrated in it on Sunday, the fifth day of the bright lunar fortnight of the Hindu month of Ashwin of that year Sometime after 1206 when the iconoclastic alien Muslim sultanate was founded in Delhi, the temple was captured, its idol was thrown away and the building was misused as a palace We come to this conclusion from the first Moghul Emperor Babur's allusion to it in his *Memoirs* 371 years later (1526), as a palace captured from his predecessor Ibrahim Lodi After Babur's son Humayun suffered reverse after reverse, around 1538 the Taj Mahal alias Teja Maha Alaya was reconquered by the Hindus We come to this conclusion because on November 5, 1556 Humayun's son Akbar had to reconquer the Delhi Agra Fatehpur Sikri region by defeating the Hindu warrior Hemu at the battle of Panipat. Apparently Akbar did not dispossess the Jaipur royal family of the Taj Mahal because the Jaipur family was his strongest Hindu ally and its scions, Bhagwandas and Mansingh, were his

most trusted generals. They were also in laws of the Moghul rulers That after Humayun's defeat the Taj Mahal passed into the hands of Jaipur royal family *is apparent from Emperor Shahjahan's chronicle* which admits having commandeered the Taj Mahal from Jaisingh, the then head of the Jaipur royal family Thus we have a continuous and consistent account of the Taj Mahal from 1155 to the present day During these 813 years of its existence, we may say that the Taj Mahal originated as a Shiva temple and continued to be so for about one hundred years For nearly 300 years thereafter it was misused as a palace or reconverted into a temple From 1630 onwards that "Resplendent Shrine (Taja Maha Alaya) stands converted into a burial place

16 Besides the trident pinnacle there are other Hindu symbols in the Taj namely the Swastika, the lotus and *the sacred Hindu chant "OM" in Devnagri character*

Visitors to the Taj may notice the letter "om" woven in bold relief in embossed flower designs on the interior marble walls As one stands poised at the top of the stairs leading to the basement chamber (to see what they call the 'real graves') one may see on the walls in front on the right and left, at chest level, the esoteric sacred Hindu letter "om" woven into the embossed marble flower patterns

Swastikas in white grill work and red lotus patterns on the borders of the grilled panels that enclose the cenotaphs may also be noticed

From the "om" and the trident and rows of rooms hidden along the three sides under the marble plinth researchers may consider whether the Taj Mahal was the epicentre of some great Shaivaite Hindu Tantric cult before Muslim occupation

As one descends the steps to the basement chamber to see the so-called graves, halfway one comes across a landing. Here on both sides are arched recesses One may notice that the arch on the left and the one on the right have been sealed with irregular marble slabs that is to say, the size of marble pieces used to seal the left arched entrance is different from those blocking the one at the right This indicates that these passages leading to the rooms under the marble plinth, around what are now believed to be the real graves were filled up and sealed at Shahjahan's order when the Taj temple was seized to be converted into an Islamic graveyard like the building-complexes at Fatehpur Sikri and the places which are now mislead ingly known as tombs of Akbar, Humayun Safdarjang and many others.

Students and scholars of architecture should therefore, look upon and study the Teja Maha Alaya, alias Taj Mahal, as a "flower" of ancient Hindu temple art and not of Muslim sepulchral workmanship The latter does not exist, at least anywhere in India. All the mediaeval so-called Muslim tombs and mosques are ancient Hindu temples and palaces The Taj Mahal is a classic instance of how the whole world has been duped and deluded for three centuries into believing that the Taj Mahal was built as a tomb That the Kali (Bhavani) temple inside the ancient Amer (modern Jaipur) fort-capital bears a close resemblance to the Teja Maha Alaya in Agra in its white marble and embossed decorative work, is further proof that before being converted into a palace and later into a tomb the Taj Mahal (Teja Maha Alaya) was a Hindu temple It is now 338 years since the original Taj Mahal Shiva temple has been forced to play the role

of a Muslim queen's mausoleum Yet another turn in its fortune may once again restore the Taj Mahal to its original status of a Shiva temple at the hands of a resurgent India, who knows!

In tracing the vicissitudes in the life of the Taj Mahal we may tentatively say on the basis of the Bateshwar inscription that the Taj Mahal was completed as a lofty temple of unequalled beauty by king Paramardi Dev of the Chandratreya dynasty on the bank of the Yamuna around 1155, in which the image of Lord (Shiva) Chandramauleeshwar was installed

Around 1630 that Hindu temple-cum palace, namely the Taj Mahal, was commandeered from the then Jaipur ruler Jaisingh At that time, as Shahjahan's chronicle, the *Badshahnama* tells us the Taj Mahal was known as Mansingh's palace (because Mansingh was its last famous occupant) The *Badshahnama* describes it as *imarat e ali shan*, a building of unique splendour, *wa Gumbaje*, capped with a dome Correspondingly the Bateshwar inscription too describes it as a crystal white temple of such enchanting beauty that Lord Chandramauleeshwar (Shiva) once consecrated inside it never thought of returning to his Himalayan abode

The Bateshwar inscription, therefore, enables us to trace the history of the Taj Mahal right from its creation around 1155 to the present year, i e 1968

That the Taj Mahal must be the focal temple—the Teja Maha Alaya—of an ancient Hindu township finds corroboration in Keene's observation on page 179 of his *Handbook* He says "The Taj Ganj (has a spot) known as Kalandar Darwaza, supposed to be that of a gateway in the wall which enclosed the ancient city of Agra centuries before Akbar's time"

This fully corroborates our finding that the area around the Taj Mahal forms part of a very ancient portion of Agra city This part of Agra had its own Shiva temple called the Teja Maha Alaya. It was enclosed by the city wall as all temples used to be in ancient and mediaeval India. In fact the Kalandar Darwaza may be a corrupt Muslim name for some ancient Sanskrit name either for some other gateway or to what is now called the Tajganj gateway leading to the Taj Mahal premises In fact in our view the proper frontal approach from ancient times must be from the Tajganj gate. It still has its massive wooden door intact

Like the Taj Mahal numerous erstwhile Hindu buildings of ancient and mediaeval India have been under Muslim occupation and made to bear false implanted inscriptions as tombs mosques and forts built by Muslims This is unwittingly betrayed in a singularly observant remark of an American visitor named Bayard Taylor He has been quoted on page 177 of *Keene s Handbook* Taylor observes "I have been struck by the singular fact that while at the central seats of the Moslem empire art reached but a comparative degree of development here and there on the opposite and most distant frontiers (i e in Spain and in India) it attained a rapid and splendid culmination."

What Mr Taylor means is that in lands so distant as Spain and India Muslim invaders apparently built stupendous and magnificent monuments but in their own lands like Syria, Iraq and Arabia they have pretty little to show of the same calibre.

We pity the naivete of Mr Taylor and those of his kind They have been badly duped What they have

been made to believe as Muslim buildings in distant Spain and India are not Muslim constructions at all Those are all usurped indigenous buildings built by local chieftains in pre Muslim times. They were only appropriated by Muslim conquerors and falsely re presented as their own through superficial camouflage and concocted chronicles This finding of ours should help Spain repudiate Muslim claims to its ancient buildings.

As a point of information we would like to add that the Taj Mahal is a little taller than the so-called Kutub Minar in Delhi On page 174 of his book Keene notes that the distance between the garden level and the other point of the spike (the trident) on the main dome is 243½ ft. while the so-called Kutub Minar in Delhi is 238 ft. and one inch in height. But since visitors cannot reach the topmost point of the trident pinnacle of the Taj but have to be much below it they do not realize the total height of the whole edifice including its pinnacle.

"The names of some early restorers are inscribed on the spike of the main dome" including those of Englishmen.

So even the inscriptions on the spike contain no claim on Shahjahan's behalf.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FAMOUS PEACOCK THRONE WAS HINDU

WE HAVE observed in an earlier chapter how the Taj Hindu palace had richly embellished central ground floor and basement chambers. The ground floor chamber had silver doors, gold railings and an enclosure surrounded by gem studded marble screens. Given such an enclosure what could it contain? It must contain something equally arresting in its richness A gilded frame would never hold an insignificant picture Similarly, the scintillating central ground floor chamber with fixtures of precious metals and precious stones formed the rich setting that the fabulous Hindu Peacock Throne so well deserved We come to this conclusion because both the Taj Mahal and the Peacock Throne enter the fictitious records of Shahjahan's reign almost simultaneously

A Peacock Throne could never have been ordered by fanatic mediaeval Muslim rulers surrounded by even more fanatic maulvis Throughout their millenium long rule in India their one penchant was to break images, not to make them

In fact, Shahjahan's motive in taking over the Hindu Taj palace was not only to break the back of a powerful and wealthy noble household by making it homeless, but also to enrich himself by the fabulous wealth that that palace contained In taking over the Taj Mahal, therefore, Shahjahan stripped it of its silver doors gold railings, gems from the delicately carved

marble screens (now left with gaping holes) and above all the famous scintillating Peacock Throne.

The Peacock Throne could only be a piece of Hindu palace furniture because traditionally Hindu thrones must have the effigy of some bird or animal known for its splendour or valour In Hindu terminology the very term for a throne is a Lion Seat *(Simhasan)*

Hindu deities and royalty had their own pet animal or bird figures supporting their thrones. In Hindu mythology the eagle lion tiger peacock and a number of other birds and animals are associated with the different gods as being the motifs of their respective thrones As against this, Muslim religious *tradition strictly rules out any figure drawing or image* Taking all this into consideration it should not be difficult for any serious student of history to realise that the myth of Shahjahan having ordered a Peacock Throne has been deftly woven into the fabric of Shahjahan s reign only because he had the Hindu Peacock Throne coolly removed to his palace soon after taking over the Taj Mahal from its owner Jaisingh

It also appears that the scintillating throne used to be covered by a costly canopy and also a net of pearls In denuding the Taj palace of such fabulous wealth Shahjahan struck a virtual gem mine leaving a cold stone edifice for the burial of his consort Mumtaz and other members of the harem

That fabulous Peacock throne later spirited away to Persia by the Muslim invader Nadir Shah is no longer extant. It was dismembered and disbursed or looted piece by piece precisely because even as a plundered heirloom the presence of an idolatrous infidel throne was anathema to fanatic Muslim royalty

A description of the Peacock Throne is given by

Shahjahan's official chronicler Mulla Abdul Hamid Lahori under the account of the eight[91] year of Shahjahan's reign corresponding with 1634 It may be recalled here that Mumtaz had died in 1630 and according to the fictitious accounts of the Taj Mahal the construction of this fabulous dreamland monument had begun within a year of her death This is said to have been carried on over a period of 10 to 22 years It may also be remembered that soon after coming to the throne on[92] 6th February 1628 Shahjahan had to spend the first few years in murdering all his rivals He had also one or the other of the 48 major military campaigns to attend to throughout his reign When Mumtaz died in 1630 or 1631, Shahjahan is also said to have distributed a lot of wealth to the faqirs and needy as we understand from the *Badshahnama* passage quoted by us in the second chapter of this book Later Shahjahan we are told, embarked on building the Taj Mahal complex.

Hardly had the project begun, then we are told that by 1634 Shahjahan had amassed such a plethora of gems and bullion, within six years of his accession that he did not know what to do with it He therefore had a fabulous Peacock Throne ordered Says Mulla Abdul[93] "In the course of years many valuable gems had come into the imperial jewel house " A little more than ordinary naiveté is needed to believe in such skulduggery Nobody seems to have bothered to compile, compare verify and subject such accounts to close logical scrutiny If we are to believe in such prodigality the Moghuls must have had bullion and

[91] P 45, Elliot & Dowson, *History* ibid., Vol. VII
[92] P 6 ibid.
[93] P 45, ibid.

gems dropping like rain over them all the time

We may, therefore, ignore the abracadabra of Shah jahan having ordered the throne and instead concentrate on its dimensions and the wealth that went into its making. Even conceding that the monetary value of the gems and bullion used in that throne may have been exaggerated by Mulla Abdul Hamid yet his description should give one some idea of what the ancient Hindu Peacock Throne usurped by Shah jahan, looked like.

According to Shahjahan's court chronicler[34] it appears that the Peacock Throne was "three yards long two and one half yards broad, five yards high and set with jewels worth 86-lakh rupees. The canopy had 12 emerald columns. On top of each pillar were two peacocks thick set with gems. Between each pair of peacocks was a tree set with rubies, diamonds, emeralds and pearls. The throne cost ten million rupees" and is said to have been completed in seven years. That means that this was yet another equally fabulous and expensive project that Shahjahan undertook even while he was building the Taj Mahal. This is something more fantastic than an Arabian Nights story. The throne had 11 recesses the middle one being for the ruler himself.

There is one possible way of finding which Hindu ruler had this throne made which ultimately found its way into Shahjahan's hand.

In Hindu tradition the ruler was always supposed to have around him his wife and sons or brothers at the enthronement and other official occasions. Lord Rama is always shown seated with his queen Seeta

[34] Pp. 45-46 ibid.

and his three brothers around him From this it seems that the Hindu ruler who ordered the Peacock Throne had nine sons The 11 recesses in the Peacock Throne were meant for him, his wife and nine sons. If in the pre Muslim history of India we can identify such a Hindu monarch known for his valour and large domain, he could very well be the monarch to have that throne made

It could also be that Chandragupta Maurya s sur name may have derived from his Peacock Throne since 'Mayura' means a peacock (in Sanskrit) and Maurya may be a derivative of Mayura. In that case the famous Peacock Throne usurped by Shahjahan could be traced back at least to Chandragupta Maurya

Another possibility could be that a Hindu ruler who was both a literary genius and a warrior could have ordered the Peacock Throne, since in Hindu mythology the peacock is the mount of both the Goddess of Learning Saraswati, and the warlord Kartikeya Swami One such ruler in ancient India known for his valour, scholarship and devotion to truth was Vikramaditya, the founder of the *Samvat* era in 57 B.C. It may be that the Peacock Throne which the Muslim emperor Shahjahan grabbed together with the Taj Mahal had been initially commissioned by King Vikramaditya, the conqueror of Arabia.

INCONSISTENCIES IN THE LEGEND

CONTRARY TO the traditional belief in their nostalgic grandeur the courts of mediaeval Muslim rulers were hot beds of squalor intrigue vice cruelty and torture. There was no scope for the promotion of art or other higher values of life in that atmosphere All talk therefore about dance painting music and building art having been encouraged is baseless In fact with the beginning of Muslim invasions all progress ceased because most of the citizenry were worried about their own physical security and the safety of their wives and children. In such an atmosphere of intense terror nothing thrives A building like the Taj Mahal pre supposes a long period of peace and prosperity

Mr Keshab Chandra Majumdar says** 'Etmad ud Daula father of Nur Jahan tells us that as many as 5 000 women nestled in Moghul harems the male issues of some of the women had to undergo solitary confinement for life' When such was the end of the ruler s own progeny one can very well imagine the lot of the citizenry a majority of whom belonged to a religion and culture highly detested by the ruler Besides we know how sodomy was rampant among the ruling families and the noblemen how eunuchs formed an important adjunct of the Muslim courts. Does not such an atmosphere lead to desolation and a negation of all art?

** P 5 *Imperial Agra of the Moghuls* by K. C. Majumdar

What with the incessant warfare they had to conduct, the retinues of servants they kept, a nobility thirsting for wealth and the huge harems, the Muslim rulers in India were always hard pressed for money To put it in the layman's terms they could hardly make both ends meet. All descriptions, therefore, of the immense wealth of the court are incorrect Wealth no doubt there used to be constantly replenished by plundering the citizenry, but it used to get drained away no sooner it was brought in. Thus court wealth ebbed and swelled In fact pressing wants necessitated raids on the ruler's poor and defenceless subjects as a manoeuvre of statecraft Almost as soon as the wealth came in it had to be disbursed The fancied treasure reserves for fanciful projects like a Taj Mahal to bury a deceased queen in were just not there Contrary accounts written by mediaeval Muslim chroniclers were motivated by the need to flatter the ruler and ensure a steady share of the ruler's wealth for themselves Basking in the sunshine of royal favour the so-called chroniclers wangled for themselves a cushy job of praising the ruler sky high and sharing in his spoils

A typical instance of how the history of Indian monuments and their architecture has been based on wild conjectures is found in *Keene's Handbook*** "Alimardan Khan (the governor of Kandahar) probably introduced the bulbous dome, which some regard as a marked feature in the decadence of Saracenic architecture in India a striking example being found in the dome of the Taj Mahal" This shows how traditional theories are conjectural bubbles in-

** P 38 footnote *Keene's Handbook* ibid

flated with endless "probables" On page 209, Keene says "The Chausath Khamba is believed to be a tomb of Bakshi Salabat Khan" (Shahjahan's chief treasurer) The words *Chausath Khamba* is a non Muslim term Ought not students of history to ask themselves as to who footed the bills of these expensive mausoleums for all the Toms, Dicks and Harrys of Moghul times, including eunuchs, *fauzdars*, prostitutes, faqirs, sons grandsons and great grandsons? Is such a thing possible within the ambit of human nature as it is constituted? Is it possible that those who built no palaces for themselves or their children built palatial tombs for hated predecessors?

Keene tells the reader on page 150 of his *Handbook* that " two baradaries and other accessories of a pleasure resort were provided here after the burial of Mumtaz " It is absurd to imagine that a *monarch bereaving the death of his wife would provide* pavilions at state expense for people to visit and revel in especially during Shahjahan's despotic era when the subjects counted for nothing. But the presence of the pleasure pavilions is yet another convincing proof that the *baradaries* (corridors) are there because the Taj originated as a Rajput palace.

How the whole story of the building of the Taj Mahal is bluff and bluster is apparent from yet another weak link in the traditional account. On page 165 of his *Handbook*, Keene states "It is highly probable that the remains of Mumtaz (brought from Burhanpur where they had lain for six months) lay in the temporary tomb near the Masjid Baoli for about nine years When they were finally removed to this tomb (in the basement of the so-called Taj Mahal) is not authoritatively known" Since such an import

ant detail as the removal of Mumtaz's body to its final resting place is missing, after all the pother of Shahjahan having built a monument specially for her burial the question arises whether the Taj does in fact contain the remains of Mumtaz and Shahjahan or whether the cenotaphs were just meant to usurp an ancient Rajput palace?

Another instance of the pathetic loopholes that riddle every single detail of the Shahjahan legend of the Taj concerns the marble screens around the cenotaphs. About these *Keene's Handbook* says on page 171, "The marble screen enclosing an octagonal area in the centre of the cenotaph chamber was according to the *Badshahnama* placed here in 1642 by Shahjahan According, however, to competent authority the screen was placed here by Aurangzeb after he laid his father's remains there"

This passage invites close examination It should be noted that Keene does not consider the *Badshahnama* the chronicle written at Shajahan's own bidding to be worthy of any credence since he calls the other authorities more competent. In so far as Keene disbelieves the *Badshahnama* he is right because, as has been repeatedly emphasized by us, and several other discerning students of history, mediaeval Muslim chronicles were written for flattery, motivated by the desire to bask in the monarch's favour But Keene is wrong in holding that even the "other authorities" he refers to as "competent" were any the more trustworthy Sycophants whether of Shahjahan's or Aurangzeb's court, were birds of the same feather The only plausible conclusion we can draw then is that the marble screen was all along there enclosing the

precious Peacock Throne of the Rajput owners of the Taj palace Aurangzeb was hardly the man who would spend any money on decorating his hated father s tomb

Sleeman says[97] that a Koranic text quoted on the queen s tomb terminates with the words And defend us from the tribe of unbelievers This ending is significant since our whole point has been to prove that the Taj Mahal was commandeered from an ' unbelieving family precisely to end that "tribe" The choice of the passage for quoting on Mumtaz s tomb betrays the purpose

How a steady barrage of propaganda kept up through centuries has resulted in misleading and befooling generations of laymen scholars of history and architects into the belief that the massive and magnificent mediaeval monuments are Muslim though in fact they belong to an earlier period may be illustrated from Sleeman s experience In Chapter IV on page 29 of his book in describing his visits to monuments in Agra the author says I crossed over the river Jumna one morning to look at the tomb of Etmad ud Daula On my way back I asked one of the boatmen who was rowing me who had built what appeared to me a new dome within the fort.

One of the emperors of course said he

What makes you think so?

Because such things are made only by emperors replied the man quietly

True very true' said an old Musalman trooper who had dismounted to follow me, with a melancholy

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[97] P 24 *Rambles and Recollections of An I dian Official* ibid.

spoken but officially recorded in mediaeval volumes believed to be authentic records of contemporary events

All that has been said in the foregoing pages should be enough to convince even the most credulous that the Taj legend is a hoax played on a gullible world Every aspect of it is riddled with contradictions The falsity of the traditional version about the building of the Taj Mahal by Shahjahan stands thoroughly exposed We must, therefore, try to reconstruct a true *account of how the Taj Mahal originated*

A number of clues discussed above have shown us that the Taj Mahal originated as a palace and not as a tomb its grandeur, pleasure pavilions, the marble screens, the rich mosaic flooring, rich fixtures like silver doors and gold railings hundreds of rooms names like Khawaspura and Jaisinghpura, lush garden full of the choicest fruit and flower plants holy to the Rajputs and the like

Referring to the falsity of mediaeval Muslim chroniclers Keene observes** "Indian historians, in attempting to belaud the acts of their kingly patrons, have often committed themselves to statements which under the searchlight of subsequent scrutiny are found to be absolutely inaccurate" Keene is mistaken in calling them Indian They were alien Muslims

In the subsequent pages he confirms that "the cenotaph of Shahjahan is unsymmetrically placed (p 172) There are 14 rooms in a line along the river face of the great basement (p 177)' About these rooms Keene says "The basement rooms are centrally situated as a line of 14 rooms along the river

** P 171 *Keene's Handbook*, ibid.

face of the Great Basement under its terrace and each of them is connected by a doorway with an inner lobby running East and West along their entire length From each end of the lobby a staircase ascends to the terrace of the Great Basement where its entrance closed by red sandstone slabs lay unsuspected until discovered a few years ago the clue being given by a small window overlooking the river in each of the two easternmost rooms The rooms once frescoed and otherwise decorated being now in darkness and infested by bats cannot be explored without a torch or lamp Whether they originally opened on to a ghat and gave admittance to the Taj from the river or being provided with windows were used as cool resorts during the heat of the day cannot now be decided

The above is a very important clue to how much is hidden from the public in the Taj Mahal The lay visitor peeping into the cenotaph chamber comes away satisfied calling it a day thinking that he has seen the mighty sepulchral handiwork of a doughty Shah Jahan. But he is being badly cheated and duped As Keene has rightly pointed out scores of basement chambers lie sealed with redstone slabs Shahjahan having had no need for them after converting the fabulous Hindu mansion into a Muslim tomb got them sealed Thus far from building anything Shah jahan got a large part of the Taj Mahal sealed or demolished This has happened with all mediaeval tombs in India whether they masquerade today as Humayun s Etmaduddaula s Safdarjang s Akbar s or anybody else s tomb

The visitor standing at the back of the Taj Mahal on the spacious redstone terrace looking at the Ya

muna river flowing underneath may well imagine that if there are 14 rooms in a row along the river front alone how many more should there be in the entire basement from the back to the front of the great marble plinth?

The visitor may also well imagine that if there are scores of rooms in the basement of the redstone terrace how many such basements could there be right upto the ground level where the Yamuna flows? Thus from the ground level to the marble platform there must be several basement storeys with each storey consisting of scores of rooms The visitor is not shown any of these All those rooms were closed to visitors ever since Shahjahan appropriated that Hindu mansion to be used as a Muslim tomb Unfortunately, even today when we are free the free citizen of a free India is still being deprived of his right of free access to all apartments of the great Taj Mahal Instead he is being doped with fairy tales of a fancied Shahjahan—Mumtaz romance

That this ban to the the basement chambers has been imposed ever since Shahjahan took over the Hindu mansion in circa 1630 is clear from Bernier's notings Bernier was a French visitor to India during Shahjahan s reign. He states Under the dome is a little chamber enclosing a sepulchre which I have not seen from within it not being opened but once a year and that with great ceremony not suffering any Christian (he means all non Muslims) to enter for fear (as they say) of profaning the sanctity of the place but really because the cat of usurpation may not be let out of the bag

Apart from the basement under the redstone terrace there is another huge basement containing many

rooms even under the marble platform The visitor who descends from the cenotaph chamber to the basement graves is made to believe that there is only one dark chamber there enclosing the two graves But that is far from the truth The darkness there is symbolic of the darkness hiding many vital details from the visitor about the surrounding rooms.

Many people being in a hurry come away with the notion that the marble building consists of only one cenotaph chamber on the ground floor and one sepulchral chamber in the basement There are many spacious halls and rooms surrounding them Keene notes on page 174 of his handbook In the remainder of the interior of the tomb round the cenotaph chamber are four square halls, one behind each apse and four octagonal halls one behind each set of three small corner apses These halls are connected by passages with each other, with the apses and with the cenotaph chamber, making it easy to walk through them from the square hall giving admission to the mortuary chamber and back to it. From each octagonal hall on the south a staircase ascends to the upper storey, the halls and passages of which are similar to those below "

Since the ground floor of the marble building has many halls and octagonal rooms it is clear that they must have their counterparts in the basement underneath If the visitor sees no access to them from the central sepulchral chamber in the basement it is clear that those entrances too have to be sealed Thus there is much to investigate unseal and discover in the basement storeys of the Taj Mahal right from the marble plinth to the Yamuna level If all those chambers in the many basement storeys are brought to

light it will facilitate the piecing together of the story of Shahjahan s usurpation of a Hindu mansion

We would also like to draw reader attention to Keene s remark that the basement rooms bear frescoes and other decoration This is another indication of their being an erstwhile Hindu mansion. Shahjahan would not build scores of ornate rooms in the basement and have them sealed! According to the *Bad shahnama* there were four serais each with 136 rooms in Mumtazabad (which obviously was the name foisted on the former Jaisinghpura and Khawaspura) and a central chowk (square) from which roads branched off at right angles This is further testimony that the ancient Rajput palace which is now known as the Taj Mahal was surrounded by other huge buildings con nected with a network of roads That is exactly what the term pura signifies in Sanskrit. Such a huge building complex can only be justified if a palace is its nucleus A tomb does not need such annexes nor can anyone afford them

After having quoted the evidence from books and articles dealing with the Taj discrediting the traditional Taj legend and establishing that it originated as a palace and not a tomb we shall now concern our selves with a survey of the building itself

Since Vincent Smith mentions on page 9 of his book titled *Akbar the Great Mogul* that Babur died in his garden palace at Agra, it is clear that all of Babur's predecessors and successors who ruled over Agra must have spent at least a few days or hours in the Taj palace as absolute owners or as guests of Raj put noblemen like Raja Mansingh and Jaisingh on whom ownership of the Taj ultimately devolved Ac cording to the Persian poet Salman Agra fort was

captured by Mohammad Ghazni, after a desperate assault, from Jaipal Whosoever ruled the fort, owned the Taj palace. Thus we come to the conclusion that Jaipal had owned the Taj and lived in it. After him Mohammad Ghazni should have stayed in the Taj at least occasionally though for security reasons he must have preferred the massive confines of the fort The others who seem to have been in occupation of the nearly 26-room marble suite of the Taj palace are Rajput rulers of the Tuar clan who came to power after Mohammad Ghazni's invasion Vishaldev Chauhan, Bahlol Lodi, Sikandar Lodi, Babur Humayun, Sher Shah, Jalal Khan, Humayun again, Akbar, Mansingh, Jagatsingh and Jaisingh It was from the last owner, as all versions invariably admit that the Taj property was taken by Shahjahan to be converted into a tomb

As the Taj had been a royal residence for generations, occupied by those who controlled Agra, it is clear that it must have been the scene of many royal births and deaths as is evidenced by the reference to Babur's death in it

In the Agra Fort gallery, facing the Taj is a tiny glass piece embedded in the wall to mirror the Taj Mahal. Originators of the Taj legend have conveniently annexed the device to add to the mesmeric effect of the myth Embedding tiny, round glass reflectors by their thousands in arched recesses of palaces and in women's dresses is a very common and widespread Rajput practice Such glass reflectors can still be seen fixed in numerous ancient palaces in Rajasthan and continue to be used for decoration in women's dresses Saracenic architecture if there be any such should rather believe in "purdah" *i e* shrouding or

hiding and would never think of glass reflectors The glass reflector in the Agra Fort gallery enabled the Rajput ruler owner to have a telescopic view of the Taj palace from the fort Shahjahan was never permitted access during internment to that part of the fort which overlooks the Taj It is therefore, absurd to argue that during detention he consoled himself by catching glimpses of the Taj in the tiny glass piece. A further absurdity and inconsistency is would an old monarch bent with age stand up all the time to strain his bedimmed vision and peer into a tiny glass piece to catch a fleeting reflected glimpse of the Taj when he could have a clear full straight and direct view of it by facing the monument? And would not such a stance give him a pain in the neck? This is yet another instance of how students of history archaeologists and lay visitors have never bothered or cared to take stock of the loose bits of the Taj legend and tried to rearrange them to find out whether they add up to at least a coherent and cogent account, even if fictitious

A government peon informed us that the tiny mirror was fixed there by his father Insha Alla Khan about 40 years ago If that is so the legend that Shahjahan used to see the reflection of the Taj in that mirror is of course a cruel hoax.

Since readers have a better idea of the results achieved by the time labour and money spent on mediaeval memorial monuments by comparing them with similar recent projects let us compare Mahatma Gandhi s *samadhi* with the Taj Mahal if the latter is to be believed an original tomb

Mahatma Gandhi s *samadhi* too had been nearly 17 years under construction It has a garden around

it. And crores of rupees have been spent in constructing it. Roughly, therefore, the time, labour and money spent on Mahatma Gandhi's *samadhi* tallies with the most exaggerated version of the time labour and money spent on the Taj And yet the results are vastly different. Mahatma Gandhi's *samadhi* stands no comparison with the grandeur massiveness covered area, embellishments and the beauty of the Taj Mahal This is so in spite of Mahatma Gandhi having commanded almost universal respect and love from a vastly larger population and a wider region In addition to its sculptural splendour the Taj is also believed to have had gem studded marble screens gold railings and silver doors. Readers can well add up the cost of all these It will amount to a fabulous, astronomical sum Perhaps even all the Moghul emperors together could not have invested that much on a single monument Besides, who would lavish so much wealth on a monument which would be the haunt of faqirs and menials? Moreover such lavishness ill suits a sepulchre It is only temples or palaces which can and do have such magnificence.

Both, the entrance from the redstone quadrangle into the Taj grounds as well as the entrance to the cenotaph chamber, face south Had the Taj been an original sepulchre, its entrances should have faced the west, because Islam allows communion with Allah, for both the living and the dead, only through the west. This is a very important clue to refute the traditional claim that the Taj Mahal originated as a tomb

Mediaeval Muslim monuments are almost always tombs, except in a few cases At the outset it appears strange that a long line of these extrovert mon-

archs built tombs but seldom palaces It is stranger still that the successor who built a palatial tomb for the predecessor, according to current tradition, also thirsted for the predecessor's blood while the latter ruled For argument's sake if we assume both those propositions to be true, then that practice of building tombs ought to have some uniformity and sense of proportion From this point of view let us compare the so-called tombs of Humayun, Akbar and Mumtaz. Humayun had hardly re established himself in India when within six months, he died He could hardly boast of a large empire and yet his so-called tomb in Delhi is a huge palatial building Akbar, the mightiest of the Moghuls, has a comparatively modest and simple tomb in Sikandra Mumtaz, the second wife of Shahjahan and one among thousands of his consorts has the grandest mausoleum In grandeur and magnificence, the Taj Mahal, Humayun's tomb and Akbar's mausoleum would rank first, second and third respectively

The reader may now reflect whether that is the ranking in history of the persons whose tombs those buildings are supposed to be That all those buildings are palaces and are entirely in the Hindu style has also to be remembered From this it becomes clear that it was a question of using whichever Rajput palace or temple that came handy for the burial, and not one of building a new mausoleum. That is why the tombs do not represent any uniformity or sense of proportion with respect to the importance of the individuals they commemorate The turmoil and the deadly internecine struggle that followed the death of every Mus lim ruler also ruled out the possibility of any special mausoleum *being built* *Nobody had any exclusive*

control of the treasury and even if he had why would he bother to spend it on an infructuous sentimental project of commemorating a dead predecessor, than on winning the war of succession? And who would supervise the building construction and how would he do it?

In the entire fabric of the Taj Mahal legend woven with the warp and woof of contradictions fabrications and inconsistencies there is only one factor remarkably constant in every narrative and version whether modern or mediaeval and whether emanating from a Muslim chronicler or a non Muslim one That detail is about the undisputed and unquestioned ownership of the "Taj", that it belonged to Jaisingh the grandson of Mansingh From them is descended the present ruling house of Jaipur

It may be noted that the so-called Humayun Tomb in New Delhi still forms part of what is called the 'Jaipur Estate It was therefore one of the palaces which the Hindu ruling family of Jaipur held in Delhi The Taj Mahal was a palace owned by the same family in Agra. Architecturally both are similar except that the grandeur magnificence and delicacy of the Taj surpasses that of the Delhi monument.

The undisputed ownership of Jaisingh over the 'Taj before it was taken over by Shahjahan, is a very crucial detail In fact in the mass of evidence available before us Jaisingh s title to the Taj property is the kingpin or the pivot on which the whole case turns from the traditional Shahjahan orientation to earlier Rajput origin

Any court of law where men of worldly wisdom preside and who do not allow their judgment to run away with noslatgic myths would at once see the importance

of the one unanimously conceded detail of Jaisingh's ownership of the Taj property as of considerable importance History scholars have blundered precisely *at this point Believing that Shahjahan built an original* tomb they all along presumed that he acquired only an empty plot of land from Jaisingh But we have already found from a very close scrutiny that the Taj legend is a fabrication from beginning to end, the inescapable conclusion therefore is that Shahjahan acquired a ready made palace and misused it as a tomb

Though we have observed that Jaisingh's ownership clinches the issue, yet there are several other proofs which reinforce our contention that the Taj Mahal originated *as a Rajput palace Inside the Taj Mahal* the entire tapestry is made up of Indian floral designs

Had the Taj been an original tomb Shahjahan would never *have allowed Indian flora to form the dominant* feature of the tapestry design inside the mausoleum of his wife It is idle to argue that because the workmen employed on the Taj happened to be Hindus their motifs got incorporated in the Taj design. It must be remembered that it is the person who pays the piper that calls the tune Moreover when it is a question of the peace of the departed soul symbols and motifs of a detested religion would never have been allowed to be incorporated in the ornamental patterns of the Taj In fact the whole idea of having such a luxurious tomb built and having decorative patterns made inside it is frowned upon in Islamic religion and tradition But Shahjahan had no alternative *but to put* up with them since he had taken *over a* ready made "heathen" monument

Those who argue that mediaeval Muslim rulers

freely allowed adoption of the Hindu style and art in their monuments must consider that even in this 20th century when the edge of orthodoxy has considerably blunted no group of Muslims will ever dare or care to plan building a tomb or a mosque in the temple style

Explaining away the presence of Hindu designs and motifs in the decorative patterns in the Taj on the basis of Hindu workmen employed is futile on another ground also Traditional Muslim records (which we have proved to be fictitious) have all along listed Muslim names as the sole designers and artisans of the Taj Their having any love or penchant for Hindu motifs is out of the question. One must also remember that the destruction of Indian temples works of art writings scriptures culture and religion used to be one of the primary and dominant objective of every Muslim ruler in India How then could the same rulers ever tolerate much less promote the incorporation of Indian art patterns and motifs in their monuments! All these considerations ought to convince us that historians and architects alike have from a superficial presumption, believed mediaeval mosques and tombs to be original Muslim structures without feeling the necessity to go into the origin of those buildings

What is worse is that in innumerable instances when these historians and architects became aware to their utter discomfiture that contrary to written claims the buildings existed even before the death of the persons whose tombs they were supposed to be they explained them away by the speculation that the deceased had "dug" their own graves in anticipation Thus Hoshang Shah's tomb in Mandu (Central India) Akbar s tomb

at Sikandra, and of Ghiasuddin Tughlak in Delhi are said to be essays in auto tomb-building by the respective monarchs who cared a hang for anybody or anything while alive and who went through their lives as though they alone would never die It is the height of absurdity to believe that the deceased monarchs built their own tombs Nothing can be more ridiculous and puerile The straight true and cogent explanation is that Rajput built mansions of old were used for the *burial of Muslim monarchs Since it did not* sound very decent and dignified that august monarchs who had lorded it over during their lifetime were not provided a fitting burial by their successors the latter have left false accounts of having built the tombs as Jahangir claims to have built Akbar s tomb Historians and architects having realized that statements like those of Jahangir and others claiming to be the builders of their respective predecessors tombs were false substituted their own myth to explain away the discrepancy It is time that such distortions and perversions deliberate and facile were removed from Indian historical texts

Lotuses are interspersed in the decorative patterns in the Taj Mahal Lotuses are not only very sacred to the Hindus but also an integral part of Hindu decorative art Their presence reinforces the case of the Rajput origin of the Taj

The wall enclosing Jaisinghpur township also goes around the Taj Mahal without any break in its continuity Had Shahjahan built the Taj Mahal as a tomb it would have had a separate wall around it removed from the town for silence and seclusion That the Taj Mahal is enclosed by the town wall reinforces our finding that the Taj Mahal as a palace or temple

is part of the town. The main entrance to the Taj Mahal (palace or temple) is also from the massive gateway of what is now called the Taj Ganj. In Varanasi too the famous Lord Shiva shrine known as Kashi Vishwanath forms part of the town and is approached from inside the town.

The Taj is connected to the Agra fort with a subterranean passage. If the Taj is considered an original tomb, an underground passage is not only redundant but absurd. Would a body laid to rest need an emergency exit and a subterranean one at that! The subterranean passage could not have been dug just for fun, because such a passage entails huge expenditure and requires a high degree of engineering skill. England and France have been toying for the last 187 years with the idea of constructing a tunnel under the channel to connect the two countries. But even with their tremendous resources they still dare not undertake the project. Moreover guarding and maintaining such a passage is still more difficult. Maintenance would involve internal lighting, preventing earth from falling from the sides and top, providing against damp, reptiles and rodents, and a constant checkup against potential enemies and miscreants using it as a hideout.

For the above reasons a subterranean passage could never be even a superfluous adjunct of a tomb. But the presence of an underground passage becomes plausible as soon as it is realized that the Taj Mahal originated as a palace and not as a tomb. A ruler staying in or visiting his palace needs an emergency underground exit if he is in danger of being surrounded by a hostile force. This is another very crucial factor in arriving at the conclusion that far

ng a se ... was a palace

The existence of a gh... and landing place for boats near the Taj also points to the inevitable conclusion that the Taj was a palace. The 14 underground chambers while being redundant in a tomb are necessary in a palace The same can be said about the Basai tower and the many annexes which have been referred to earlier

While all accounts agree that before Shahjahan took it over the Taj property was owned by Jaisingh they differ hopelessly concerning the mode of acquisition. We have already seen that Shahjahan's own official chronicler Mulla Abdul Hamid has recorded that the Taj palace was acquired in exchange for some landed estate elsewhere in Shahjahan s dominions. But B P Saksena records in his book[89] that the plot was acquired for a nominal price" Significantly enough, Abdul Hamid fails to point out which plot was given in exchange as Saksena fails to say what the nominal price was

Shahjahan had no scruples in ordering forged and false accounts to be written This fact is known to historians While a prince Shahjahan had turned a rebel against his reigning father Jahangir He had therefore been referred to in vile and abusive terms in the account of Jahangir s reign written at the latter s behest. Copies of that chronicle officially blessed and circulated were with all the courtiers when Shahjahan came to the throne For such a damaging record to be in the possession of the nobility even after Shahjahan had begun to rule was intolerable to him He

[89] *History of the Shahjahan of Dehli* by Prof B P Saksena